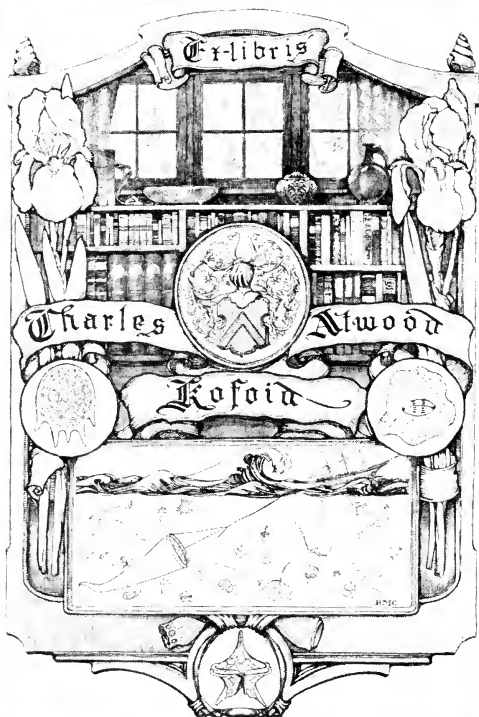




LYONS  
HUNTING



BY J. H. HENSON





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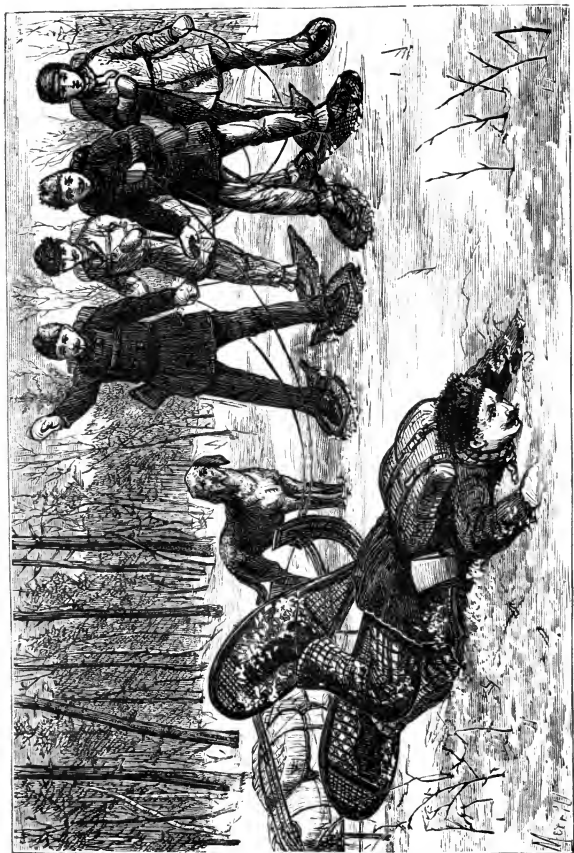












THE DOCTOR WAS DOWN.

*THE CAMPING-OUT SERIES.*

*VOLUME IV.*

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# LYNX-HUNTING:

FROM NOTES

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CAMPING OUT."

BY C. A. STEPHENS.

ILLUSTRATED.

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## NOTE.



IN this volume are recorded the incidents of a winter's sport in the backwoods of Maine.

Although but amateur naturalists, the young gentlemen of our party cherish a modest hope to have herewith contributed somewhat of general information, as also of amusing detail, to the natural history of the State. Reference is respectfully invited to the "Field-Notes" following the story proper. — ED.





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# LYNX-HUNTING.

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## FIRST DAY.

A Winter Sunrise. — The Spruce-Woods. — Our Party. — "The Doctor." — "Grip." — A Moose-Sled. — Our "Supplies." — "Rackets." — The Doctor on Rackets for the First Time. — The "Military Road." — Winter Scenery. — Rackets on a Steep Hill-side. — A Lynx-Trail. — Deer at a Distance. — A Frozen Lake. — Camping. — An Old Pine-Fire. — Pitch-Wood. — Our First Night in the Woods.

IT was half-past seven o'clock, the morning of the 9th of January, 1871. We were a "merry company;" albeit our noses, ears, and toes were a little frosty. We had just been set down at the end of the road, far up in Somerset County (Maine), bag and baggage; and the horse-sled which had taken us up from the "settlement" five miles below was now just disappearing among the spruces, twenty rods down the snowy trail, on its return. We were fairly launched on the wilderness.

It was not quite sunrise: but the whole south-east was

ablaze with yellow fire; and, as we gazed, a single thin streak of vivid crimson shot up half way to the zenith, and heralded the coming orb. A rosy light bathed the white earth, and smiled back to the crimson clouds, so cold, and yet so bright, in the crisp black setting of the spruce-forest. Here and there a Hudson-Bay squirrel chickered sharply, and stirred the evergreen-boughs. Now and then a sharp crack of frozen wood echoed off among the rough trunks. Wintry little chickadees were hopping busily about, getting a breakfast of Heaven knows what, but finding time to chatter their tireless monody.

There were five of us; viz., Mr. J. W. Raedway and Mr. G. W. Burleigh of Boston, Mr. Wade H. Additon of South Carolina, "Dr." J. A. Coffron, formerly of Worcester, Mass., besides the writer.

The reader may quite possibly claim the three former young gentlemen as old acquaintances under the abbreviated names of Raed, Wash, and Wade, respectively.

But Dr. Coffron, better known among us as "the Doctor" simply, was a more recent acquisition; though very likely not now professionally unknown to the readers of daily literature in that department thereof which setteth forth the curative omnipotence of *patent medicine*: for the Doctor has (since the events herein recorded) opened a "lead" thereunto, which promises well — in print — for the sanitary welfare of the globe. Indeed, the Doctor boasts, that, although he may not as yet have actually dethroned the king of terrors, he has still fairly wrested *Magna Charta* from him, if people will only accept him as their champion, and take



his "sirup." Nothing can be fairer than this proviso, as everybody must see. I have myself tasted the sirup. It tastes well. There is no knowing what it might do if one should make an habitual use of it at one dollar per bottle; and it seems to me that no one could seriously doubt that longevity would be cheaply enough purchased at six shillings a quart *in currency*.

I subjoin an extract from one of young Raedway's letters, received a few days before setting off on the lynx-hunt; and meanwhile add a "glimpse physique" taken from a full-length photograph of our embryo Æsculapius, which, *minus* "the tall hat," gives a very good idea of the "style" in which he first dawned upon the writer.

Raed says, "Perhaps you've heard me speak of Cofron, the young 'medic' studying over at Cambridge, and prowling round the hospitals here. We call him 'Doctor' from his prospective profession. Queer stick; a singular combination of a good fellow and a 'cuss.' Has all a young M. D.'s usual disrespect for his own carcass and those of other folks. Will swallow raw oysters by the half-dozen at twelve, P.M., and go to bed on them, regardless; and at the same time denounce all such *swallowings* as 'blasphemies against nature,' 'rewards for apoplexy,' and 'baitings for the nightmare.' But he's a merry wretch, afternoons,—one of the sort you can never get rid of when once you've got acquainted.

"Well, he got wind of our going down with you, and wanted to go too, as a matter of course, you see. So we've invited him. He'll bore us. But, then, if we should happen to get hurt,—shot accidentally,—or be

sick, any of us, we might be glad of his services. They say he's famous as a cutter and slasher in the 'dissecting-room.' "

I say there were five of us, to the manifest neglect of the sixth of our party,—a fine large brown-and-white bloodhound, the property of Mr. Additon; brought by him from the South. We had thought our fox-hounds not quite "savage" enough for the *lucivee*.

"Grip" was a powerful beast: none of us cared to provoke him too far. His weight was a hundred and twenty odd pounds; a lineal descent of the "negro hunters,"—the old Cuban breed,—so Additon says. On several occasions we saw him close boldly with the lynx; once with a bear: but the deep snows prevented his doing us the service he otherwise might.

This morning the snow was about two feet and a half deep on a level in the woods; rather light, and interlaid with no supporting "crusts." My younger comrades had already taken their degree on snow-shoes; but I feared for the Doctor. To walk readily and easily on rackets requires some little practice, together with considerable natural aptitude. I have seen fellows who found it quite impossible to get the "hang" of them. We felt a little anxious in the Doctor's behalf, and had deemed it advisable to sound him somewhat. Accordingly, the evening before, Raed had asked, incidentally, whether he had ever been on rackets.

"Well, yes," replied the Doctor; "that is, I used to do a little in that line: but—out of practice, you know. Shall have no difficulty, I think. Very simple movement. Don't you think so?"

"Oh, yes!" said Raed. "It's nothing, after you get the knack of it."

"So I always said!" exclaimed the Doctor; "so I always said! All it wants is a little adaptability. Does seem a trifle odd when you first mount 'em, I promise you; but you soon catch the *movement*."

All this was delivered with such profound sagacity, and had, moreover, such an air of giving us instruction, that we hastily changed the topic, thankful to get off so easy from our gratuitous, not to say *scurvy*, suspicions.

I had bought of an Oldtown Indian a moose-sled for drawing our luggage by hand, — a novel sort of vehicle, deserving a brief description. To allow of sledding amid a thick growth, it was made very narrow, — not over fifteen inches in width. Its length was about seven feet. The shoes, which are of white-ash, were very thin, but fully five inches broad, to prevent its cutting into the snow. These shoes also curve over in front, and are bent back to form the beams. It was not stiff, but would *yaw* and warp, adapting itself to the trail. Indeed, there was not a nail nor a screw about it. All the fastenings were made with thongs of green moose-hide. The spaces between the bars were *bottomed* with the same material. Attached to the nose was a long line (twenty feet) with two rungs, knotted at the middle and end, for dragging it. The reason for so long a drag-rope was to give room for four to pull on snow-shoes; and, when a fellow pulls on snow-shoes, he wants plenty of sea-room for his heels.

[Our "supplies" consisted of a quarter of beef weighing seventy odd pounds, a firkin of pies (mince

and pumpkin), a bag of meal, a small quantity of pork, together with butter, sugar, salt, pepper, &c. Then there were a spider and kettle, knives and spoons; also an axe, our two guns, seven steel traps, our blankets, &c., — in all, fully two hundred and fifty pounds. This load was stowed on the moose-sled, and lashed and relashed hard and fast. In addition, each of us had his knapsack-bag and strap, containing the more strictly *personal* property of each.]

I had got together five pairs of rackets of various sizes, patterns, and styles of workmanship; though I had taken care not to get any of the memorable basket-bottomed variety. They were all of a pretty good quality, having well-seasoned ashen frames, bottomed with green moose-hide woven tightly. They were rather narrower than the prevailing pattern, in proportion to the length; save one pair, which was exceedingly broad.

Throwing them out on the snow, we invited the Doctor to take his choice, — out of courtesy, of course. He threw a critical glance over them, also a rather hypercritical one at our faces, snapped his fingers, and hummed once or twice.

“Well,” quoth he, “I shall take those broad ones, on the whole. You see, I am, as I may say, rather the *soggiest* of the party. Those strike me as being the nearest my figure; capacity for support being always in proportion to the supporting surface, considered superficially. The broad ones for me, decidedly.”

Nobody objected.

Raed, Wash, and Wade drew for the remaining pairs. I took Hobson's choice, and we proceeded “to mount.”

As the Doctor was confessedly out of practice, we modestly forbore to look while he adjusted his straps. Venturing to steal a glance, however, I discovered that he was regarding Raed (who was bent over, tying his strings near him) with an eye attentive to the details. The process is by no means intricate. The shrewd Doctor at once caught the "general principles" of it: then it would have done any one's heart good to see the experienced flourish with which he whipped up his pant-legs about four inches, and to hear the little grunt of practical resignation with which he bent himself to the task.

"All ready!" said Raed presently, taking a few preliminary steps.

"All right!" shouted the Doctor, straightening up, and looking hard at us, but standing still as if knee-deep in a bog.

We four younger men took our places at the drag-rope, and started ponderously forward with the sled. Tramp, tramp, tramp! The crisp, dry snow creaked like wood under the ashen runners. Grip bounded forward with a grand bay of exultation; but he slumped a good deal.

"Come on, Doctor!" shouted Wash.

"Ay, ay, sir!" responded our medical friend patronizingly. "But isn't this a lovely morning and a gorgeous scenery? Ah! this is what we city men need to give us *tone* and *verve*, as our French cousins say. Exhilarating! — prodigiously so!"

It is hardly practicable to walk on rackets, dragging a sled, and, at the same time, watch events taking place

behind one: besides, we had no desire to fluster (if such a thing were possible) the Doctor by a too close scrutiny of his maiden steps. We heard rather than saw him start; and a certain jerky irregularity of the sounds from the snow told us he was coming on. I had an idea that something rather funny was happening. Grip stopped, and looked back with a very whimsical expression for a dog. He wrinkled his nose casually. Raed looked to me, and raised an eyebrow. But we moved on, and kept our eyes about our business; that is to say, our feet. Several rods were gone over. Presently, however, a sort of prolonged stumble and *wallop*, followed by a very naughty adjuration, sounded from the rear, and this in so unmistakable an accent of desperation, that we all turned with clumsy caution.

The Doctor was down, both arms stuck in the light snow, and muttering — any thing but his prayers!

Now, it is no joke for even an experienced tramper to fall flat, with rackets on, in a deep-light snow. Sometimes getting up is a work of half an hour. The Doctor was wallowing tremendously. Roughly, his flounderings resembled those of a horse trying to roll up hill. Wash was unfeeling enough to shout out a hearty laugh; at which the Doctor, perceiving that he was discovered, fought the snow out of his face, and, getting his head up a few inches, said with a forced laugh, —

“Boys, see here (pant): I’m (pant, wheeze) floored!”

As he had had the goodness to laugh himself, we all took the liberty to do so while striding back to his assistance. We got hold of his snowy arms, and tugged

at him. He started hard; yet we raised him: but he couldn't stand.

"They seem — to have their — their *tails crossed!*" he puffed, making an unavailing struggle to step, and thereby nearly upsetting the whole of us.

Sure enough, come to scuff away the snow, he had the long hind-points of his snow-shoes interlocked, much after the fashion of the sign of the constellation Pisces. Holding him up, we managed to get them apart.

Meanwhile the Doctor seemed to think that some explanation of so *singular* an accident was required of him.

"A twig of this shrub, this *Manzanaris occidentalis*" (I hope the reader will be able to identify this shrub), "caught in the wicker-work," he observed. "Tripped me. Served me right. Ought to have had my eyes on the footing, instead of among the evergreens. But such a glorious landscape! Boys, I sometimes wish I had been a painter instead of a saw-bones. A morning scene like this, for instance! — ah! to depict it would be a balm for the soul, a whiff of bliss, an antidote for sin, a soothing preparation for paradise! Off to the north-east, there, now! those peaks — how they seem to swell up to the skies!

" "Oh! there's grandeur where the dark mountains  
Up to dark skies gloomily swell, —  
The home of perennial fountains,  
Where retreating snows may dwell." "

The Doctor sighed resignedly; then, with an off-hand gesture, recited, —

“But Happiness flits in the future,  
Like the Calmuck's swift-riding bride,  
When, perverse to his efforts to catch her,  
She leads him a long, loveless ride.”

This was given with such a burst of feeling, that we were all quite carried away with him. Even Grip bayed sympathetically. And it was not till some time afterwards that it occurred to me how completely our attention had been distracted from the rather awkward little episode which had brought us to his rescue. Indeed, it is highly improbable that our thoughts would ever have reverted to it, had not another almost exactly similar tumble associated it with the former mishap, ere we had gone another hundred yards. Wash and Raed went back to help him up.

“Hang it!” exclaimed the Doctor, his hair full of snow. “If that doesn't make twice! Confound that manzanaris-bush! Thou insidious, grovelling ‘snake in the grass’—or rather snow! Thou enemy to the foot of man!”

As he came waddling along, I noticed that his rackets “kicked up” in such a way as to keep his back constantly snowed. He had actually looped the strap into the skin-bottom behind his heel, by way of making his foot fast; so that, instead of dragging when he stepped, the racket rose bodily with his foot. I called his attention to this fact, remarking that his strap had got *accidentally* caught in the hind-part of the shoe, and volunteered to set it right.

“Thank you, thank you!” he cried, shaking his wet



hands. "If you would be so kind! My fingers are a little numb." And, while I was down beside him, he kept patting me good-humoredly on the shoulder, with "Now, Christopher, you're the sort of comrade I like to travel with. Should love to make the *grand tour de monde* with one trusty companion like you."

"Surely," thinks I to myself, when I at last got clear of those fondling pats, "if ever it was given a man to slide through the world successfully by the prodigal use of such lubricants as the colloquial oil (or, rather, skunk's grease) of flattery and wheedledum, the Doctor's the man."

But then the Doctor *has teeth*, and can show them savagely on occasion.

I could but pity him this time, though. He was making a martyr of himself. The rackets badgered him half to death: but, for more than half an hour, he lumbered on; then, with our united advice, took them off, and waded in the trail behind the sled. Here he went in to his knees at about every step, but declared it was a "relief;" and no doubt it was.

For a mile, our route led amid low hemlock-clumps interspersed with spruce and fir. We wound our way among these. The snow let our rackets in from two to three inches; and it was not a little inclined *to load them*, — a circumstance which augmented the labor of walking considerably. The tract we were crossing had been mostly cleared of its timber by lumbering-parties several winters before. In the course of an hour, however, we entered the primitive forest; but, ere long, emerged into an old "road" cut out years ago by the

General Government on occasion of a threatened war with Great Britain. This military roadway connects with another which was opened to the Canadian frontier. Fortunately it was never called into requisition in the manner contemplated. It is now rather bushy, though still presenting a broad trail leading off north-north-west. Along this relic of threatened invasion we drew our moose-sled in peace, our march boding no evil to any thing save the genus *Felis*.

The sun shone brightly in. The thick spruce broke the cold breeze. It was frosty; but the exercise made us very comfortable. The white prismatic snows, the black, crisp boughs, the red cheeks and sparkling eyes of my comrades, and the sharp, bracing air, were all exhilarating, inspiring. Grip was tearing about with occasional yelps, echoed sharply from the frozen wood. Here and there a partridge whirred off at our approach. We were *bathed* in this wintery scenery of Nature's own portraying. We felt free;—free as air, and accountable to nobody save our own consciences. Life looked bright as a chromo. Our spirits were light; our thoughts ran blithely. We laughed, we joked, we sang and hallooed, in all the vigor of full, healthy, physical action. Ah! that would have been the time to meet one's worst enemy, and forgive him; and, if he wouldn't be forgiven, laugh at him, and bid him joy of his hatred.

Is it not a fact worth thinking of, that one cannot *hate*, and plan revenge, when thus joyously inspired of Nature? I set that fact against all the miserable spite and malice in the world, as its antidote. Creep out of your den, O n'santhrope! and let the bright sun of

the wild woods shine on your unhappy head; let the sharp Christmas air ventilate your unhealthy plottings; let the forest and the mountains behold you.

But we grew silent ere long. Better thoughts succeeded mirthful outbursts. The woods always have this effect. Your true woodsman is invariably taciturn: at least, that is the adjective we give him. But it is not like the taciturnity of the town: it is a grave reserve, which might be mistaken for moroseness. Reader, are you afflicted with some chatterbox of a friend? A month in the forest will cure him. Magpies and rooks don't nest in the wilderness.

After about five miles of the "military road," we came to a point where it bent off at an angle of about seventy degrees to the north-east, seemingly to avoid a steep, wooded ridge. We had in mind to cross this ridge, and enter the township to the north-west: so we left the road, and entered the unbroken forest. Sledding was here more intricate. We had to corkscrew our way among the trunks and bushy clumps. For a couple of hours we toiled up the mountain-side through a thick growth (spruce mainly). The tree-trunks assisted us: indeed, in some places, we could hardly have got up but for these helps. A snow-shoe is not a very happy sandal for a steep hillside. Wash lost his footing once, and tumbled down in a miscellaneous fashion for nearly twenty yards, when he brought up in a scrub-fir: but the Doctor, who was wallowing behind, helped him up, and "brushed his back;" and, after some snapping of his wet fingers, he took to the trail again, and came up bravely. It was a gallant sight to see friend Raed-

way climb, he did it so deliberately, and with such far-seeing calculation!

Working our way up, and raising the sled by sheer honest lifting at the line, we reached the summit of the ridge at a few minutes after twelve, all hungry as Turks. The crest was probably ledgy under the bright icy snow-crust. Only a few shrubby evergreens grew along the summit; and the eye ranged all over a fine view to the north and north-west. A thin, hazy film, creeping slowly up out of the south-west, quenched the zeal of the sunshine, which had, but for this, been quite dazzling; for a broad lake reflected it from a shining crust. It was a fine, bold expanse, stretching off for eight or nine miles, set with a few dark-wooded islands, winding among branch-brown headlands, and bounded far away by a black woods-line. It came back almost under us, not more than a mile from where we stood, and extended off to the east for a couple of miles farther.

Here we lunched on cold mince-pie. Nobody chose cold pumpkin-pie; and I'm sure I don't see why anybody should, unless the alternative were *squash*.

"Shall have to chew snow for drink," Wash remarked, "unless the Doctor wrings his pant-legs."

"But won't snow make our mouths *swell* up?" Wade asked.

"Not when the sun is as warm as it is to-day," said Raed. "Up north, with the mercury down to thirty degrees below zero, they say snow will *bloody* a man's mouth; but it won't here to-day."

We ate snow sparingly, and felt no inconvenience from it.

My eyes wandered away to the snow-clad lake, asleep beneath its shield. Its broad white reaches had a certain grand seeming, its perfect level contrasting well with the hilly country about it. All along the north-western horizon a succession of wild, dark peaks showed against a pearly sky, the opalescence of which foreshadowed another snow-storm. There was that dead silence, and want of motion, in the landscape, which always marks the winter-scene in high latitudes. As I looked, my eye on a sudden detected three dark objects near one of the islands, moving slowly along. The pocket-glass showed them to be deer, — caribou, we presumed. They were about three miles distant.

A cold sensation along our backs warned us that our clothing, moist from our morning travel, was cooling. It was time to start on.

We crossed the crest of the ridge, and began to descend. It was steeper, if any thing, on the northern side than on the other. To prevent the sled from running on of its own weight, a second line was attached behind, and put in the hands of Wade and the Doctor. A great deal of caution was necessary for our own safety as well as that of the sled. We were an hour getting down to the pond-shore. The caribou had disappeared from the lake. Possibly they had heard our loud talk while teaming the sled down the slope.

Among the black alders which skirted the shore we crossed a fresh lynx-track, looking as if made not ten minutes previously. The creature had passed at a run, leaping eight and ten feet at a jump. Grip yelped sharply, snuffing the strong scent, and, but for Wade's

peremptory recall, would have taken it at once. The trail was a very marked one, owing to the depth and softness of the snow. It looked as if a horse had torn along at a gallop. The boys eyed it in silence, with covert glances around. Even the Doctor, coming up, regarded the long plunge with much of the habitual self-complacency discharged from his countenance. A tardy suspicion seemed to occur to him, that the beast which made that track might be an ugly customer to hunt. But he said nothing. Men like the Doctor do not generally ventilate their private opinions: they keep those to themselves.

Keeping due north-west, we crossed the upper arm of the lake (the width of which Raed estimated at two thousand meters), and made the northern shore at a point where some half a dozen lofty pine-stubs towered from a sort of bluff fifteen or twenty feet above the water-level, back a few rods from the alder-fringe. Beneath the high, weathered stubs grew a profusion of low evergreen, with here and there a shaggy black spruce. Going up from the ice, we came upon another lynx-trail, looking as if two or three had passed in company.

The short winter afternoon was waning. We had come, since dismissing our team, about twelve miles, we supposed. The presence of the *loup-cervier* was here demonstrated by the tracks; and we decided to camp among the evergreens on the bluff, for a few days at least. The stubs offered an abundance of dry wood. A site was accordingly agreed upon, and we set to work. The first thing necessary was to tread and beat down the snow. This task was delegated to Wade and the

Doctor. Four crotched stakes were cut, and the sharpened points stuck down into the snow for the corner-posts of our camp. We made it about ten by twelve on the ground. Poles were laid in the crotches, and other poles and branches laid on. Evergreen was then cut down by the quantity. The roof was thatched with boughs. As no rain was to be expected at this latitude during this season, our only care was to get it snow-tight. Evergreen-shrubs were piled up on the north on both ends, and upon about half the south side. The part directly fronting one of the stubs — the place where we built our fire — we left open. The snow inside the camp was then spread over with boughs to the depth of a couple of feet, and an additional quantity thrown in for bedding. We took care, too, not to leave our camp exposed by felling the adjacent shrubbery.

We were not over an hour getting arranged; which, considering the amount of work done, was an expeditious job. But my three younger comrades had camped out before, and “knew the ropes.” The Doctor, too, bore a hand very effectively, — for a green one, — working with a will, and asking no questions. The tramp had somewhat *soupled* his overarching spirits; and he was doubtless hungry enough not to delay supper by questioning the preliminaries.

The next thing was to fell one of the stubs, and split up firewood for the night. Ten minutes' smart chopping sufficiently weakened it at the butt. It fell over with a harsh, roaring crack, and plunged into the snow, throwing up a long line of *spray*. The fall resounded across the snowy lake, and echoed from far into the dark-

ening woods. Matches were got out, and a fire was soon crackling. The dry pine burned fiercely, and was liberally supplied. I have no doubt we burned each day a thousand feet, — board-measure, — worth forty dollars in Boston; for the stubs were grand, clear old trunks, which defied rot and the weather, though standing there bare and dead for nobody knows how long. Down near the ground they were “fat” with pitch, and of the color of old port held against the sun. That a pile of this pitchwood as big as a haycock made a “torcher” of a fire, I have no need to assure the reader.

As soon as coals had formed, and could be raked out, a spider full of the steak was set a-frying, and the coffee-pot charged, and put down to boil. Raed then set himself to make a “hasty-pudding” in the kettle. For this purpose a second smaller fire was kindled, and a lug-pole laid upon two crotched stakes stuck into the snow on both sides of it. This evening he procured water by melting snow. Former experience had taught him the “formula” for this sort of pudding. Under his hands it proved a success, save a few “blubs.”

Here I may be permitted to remark, that to make a hasty-pudding without *blubs*, is, to my mind, a problem ranking next to the “squaring of the circle.” I have yet to see the boy or the man who can do it. The art seems to be, at present, confined to a few dear old ladies born late in the eighteenth century. Their grandmotherly hands (God bless ’em!) do somehow have the knack of filtering in the meal so suently, that one may partake with no fear of “stickers.” But the art will die with them,



A FIRE WAS SOON CRACKLING.





Meanwhile Wash and Wade were filling the little kerosene-lamp we had brought along, and, by means of a birch-with, suspending it from the roof of the camp. It was lighted; and I espied the Doctor solicitously examining, by the aid of a small hand-glass from his travelling-bag, a scratch he had received in his cheek. But the glare from the fire outside the doorway quite eclipsed the lamp, and lighted up the whole neighborhood. I feared for the effect on the game; but it was too late to remedy it, farther than by piling evergreen around.

Supper was called. We had steak from the spider, fried potatoes, hasty-pudding with sugar and butter, coffee, mince-pie, and pumpkin-pie. No cheese. We ate sitting cross-legged on the boughs in the doorway of our camp, fanned by hot blasts from the fire. The whole atmosphere was redolent with strong odors of sizzling pitch. The dull twilight had faded in the leaden darkness of an overcast sky. The great white lake stretched away dim and still and cold. It was lighter than the sky; for the dark snow-bank in the south-west had moved up, and shut out the starlight. All was still save an occasional sigh of the storm-foreboding wind, which now and then crept in from the lake among the spruces.

Our mighty fire roared and surged and crackled. The "fire-fiend" of our newspaper reporters seemed to exult in these stores of rich old fuel. We watched it, thinking of the enormous force with which the atoms of carbon and oxygen were combining, — a force sufficient when utilized, to overturn mountains, — raging, and running waste before our eyes.

Raed brought out a small thermometer, and carried it to the back-side of the camp, where it was hung up in a low fir. At bedtime it there indicated  $17^{\circ}$  above zero. Our big fire, doubtless, had its influence on this reading. The Doctor was apparently much interested in the thermometer. He went out to see how it stood several times that evening. This seemed to amuse Raed and Wash very much. But I did not quite take the joke till the next day; when, happening quite accidentally to stumble against him, I detected a faint *swash* inside his overcoat, suggestive of a "leetal trop of prandee." An idea broke upon me; but nothing was said: only "going round to see how the glass stands" acquired a new and rather equivocal significance ever after that.

The guns were loaded, and set handy; Grip was tied in one corner of the camp: we then arranged our blankets, coats, and mufflers, and lay down on the boughs, with the understanding, that, whenever any of us waked, he was to get up and fix the fire.

A little smoke drifted in at the door,—not much; but the odor was very pronounced and soporific: we all sank asleep under it. We were tired out with our tramp, and slept well, judging from my own experience. I waked but once: it was then a few minutes past two. My comrades were all snoring. Grip alone looked up. I went out. It was snowing thickly, with wintry little gusts which beat in at the doorway. But the fire was still burning ruddily, despite the sifting flakes. I piled on half a dozen of the great yellow-bright quarter-logs, and poked up the hissing brands. There was a huge bed of coals, which gave off heat by the kilogram. Inside the

camp, the temperature was not uncomfortably low. I didn't go round to see *how the glass stood*. The Doctor said he was up three times, and that he heard at twenty minutes past one a terrific screeching and caterwauling off in the woods.

## SECOND DAY

A Snowy Forest. — A Hare. — The Doctor wakes up Cross, and expresses some Radical Opinions. — A Fresh Lynx-Trail. — The Chase and Capture. — The Skinning. — Some Anecdotes of the Lynx. — Tired out.

A STIR at seven. It had stopped snowing, and the clouds were broken in places. There had come about three inches. The evergreens were laden with it. Every thing had a wintry look. Here and there a loaded bough threw off its burden with a sudden flop and a soft thud.

A hare had passed within a few yards of the fire; and, not a hundred feet away, I espied another sitting up under a low spruce, white as the snow itself, and blinking at us softly with its large dark eyes. Just then a fox barked with a long-drawn *yar-r-r-r-r*, at no great distance. Master "Fatty" instantly ducked his head.

The fire had got low. It was rather cold. Raed came out with his teeth chattering. We hastened to pile on wood.

Presently we heard the Doctor rousing up. He was in a rather unhappy frame of mind this morning. Whether he had over-exerted himself the previous day,

or a too-constant anxiety about the thermometer had worn upon his mind, I shall not take it upon myself to give an opinion. He felt blue. I have no doubt that the world looked gloomy enough to him. It *was* miserably cold. The *glass was low*, — only 4° above. Furthermore, his legs were so lame, he could hardly *locomote*; caused, probably, from having to straddle so wide on his *broad* rackets. No wonder he grumbled. We went in to condole with him; and says Raed, —

“I’m afraid, Doctor, that the mercury is rather low for you this morning.”

“Oo-o-o-o-o, yes!” he moaned out with a creep and a shudder. “O boys! this is an awful climate, a diabolical climate! I wish I was inside the tropic of Cancer. Why do folks persist in living in these frozen latitudes, when the equator invites to warmth, health, and ease? Would I were on an island in those balmy seas! Palms, spices, and odors of Araby the Blest! — what a substitute for snow-drifts, winter winds, dark forests, and frosty toes!”

The implied comparison so affected him, that he jumped up, and, stamping on his boot, cried out that it did seem as if “man was born an incorrigible — fool!” a mud-head, with an ineradicable, absurd, and insane love of the North!

“Come, come, Doctor,” interrupted Raed, “that’s mere jaundice.”

“Jaundice!” exclaimed the Doctor hotly. “Well, what would Napoleon have been if he hadn’t had jaundice? Napoleon, man alive, was ‘mere jaundice’ personified! Jaundice, and not Napoleon, turned Europe

wocker-side-knockamus! Reproach me with my jaundice (which I haven't got, but wish I had). Why, jaundice is the Archimedean lever which hoists the world up the 'ringing grooves' of civilization and go-aheadativeness!"

By way of giving weight to this axiom, the Doctor stamped on his other boot so effectively, that his foot went down through the boughs, and broke into the snow nearly to his knee. Wash had to help him pull it up. But the exercise resulting from the scuffle, and the argument, started his sluggish blood. He brightened a little, and began to take a more hopeful view of things.

"Well, boys," said he, "we must take the world as it is, and knock down difficulties as they rise: yes, boys, as fast as they show their grim heads, give 'em a sock-dollager right between the eyes! Knock spots out of 'em! Down with 'em, and stamp on their stomachs! For, mind ye (very deliberately, and with upraised finger), the stomach is to the human race what Achilles' heel was to him,—his weak spot, his one ever-vulnerable point. Hencequently, if you have an antagonist, lend him one in the stomach, wind him, raise his diaphragm for him!

"Ah these stomachs of ours!" (shaking his head despondently.) "No use talking to 'em! They've no ears, as the venerable Grecian said,—no ears, and all mouth,—guzzle, guzzle!—while the ever-forming vacuum clamors '*More, more!*' even as" (slapping his waist-band) "I feel it now,—gnawing, gnawing! How about breakfast? Don't let me hinder breakfast. Guess I'll go round and see how cold it is."

In about three minutes he came back, and reported



five degrees above, *and rising*. The bracing air behind the camp had clearly invigorated him. His eyes had begun to sparkle. "Whew, whew!" he whistled, smacking his lips, and snuffing at the spider of steak, "don't this smell good? Breakfast, and then — cats!"

Then he told us of the screeching he had heard in the night.

"'Twas the cold-bloodedest noise," said he, "that ever tingled my tympanum. 'Twas a scratching yawl. There were long claws in it. I positively could smell their breaths as I listened. It was resonant with assafoetida. Long nails were ripping in it. Why, I could seem to see the hair fly!"

We laughed.

"Fact!" cried the Doctor, — a brilliant *jeu d'esprit* of an overwrought imagination.

"Notice how cold it was when you were up, then?" Raed asked incidentally.

"No, no, — not particularly," said the Doctor.

"Was it snowing then?" Wash inquired.

"Snowing? Let me see" (glancing guardedly at the snowy shrubbery). "Yes, 'twas; snowing fast, I remember now."

We had breakfast; and then, while Raed and I went down to the lake to cut a hole in the ice for water, Wash and Wade strolled off to reconnoitre.

The Doctor, meanwhile, got on his snow-shoes, and began to practise *the step*, as he remarked to us.

Cutting a hole through thirty inches of ice under three feet of snow proved a task of some half an hour's duration. Ere we had got down to the water, we heard

Wash calling to us ; and, before we could comply, all three of them had gone off, taking Grip and the guns.

“ Found a track, I guess,” Raed conjectured.

Hastily strapping on our rackets, we set off on their trail ; and, the Doctor still experiencing considerable difficulty in taking *the step*, we came up with them about a quarter of a mile away.

They were hurrying on, Wade leading the blood-hound by the rope.

“ Oh, we’ve come upon a plunger of a trail ! ” exclaimed Wash, turning excitedly to explain to us. “ Just gone along ! Since the snow in the night ! ”

The Doctor was striding laboriously, doing his level best to keep up. On his countenance sat a grim resolution to walk or die this time. He did pretty well, too, with both arms stuck out at nearly right angles to help keep his balance. If any thing will bring a man out, it is game ahead.

About a hundred yards farther on, we came to the track. It was among a clump of shrubby hemlocks loaded down and half buried in the snow, — the same headlong sort of trail we had seen the previous evening. The lynx had gone on a run, with long bounds, striking all its feet at once. At every one of these plunges it had gone down fully two feet, sending the snow flying and rolling all about.

But a little to the north of where the boys had struck the track on first coming out, we saw where the creature had walked slowly along. I therefore concluded that it had been quietly passing in search of a breakfast, when it either saw or heard them coming, and ran. The Doctor came up.

"What think of that?" demanded Raed, pointing to the grand plunges in the snow.

But the Doctor did not choose to commit himself to any premature opinions.

"Great muscular development indicated," was all we could get from him.

Wade hurriedly untied the rope from Grip's collar. The hound was eagerly snuffing, nose in the snow, and tail in the air, with loud snuffings from moment to moment. Immediately he felt himself free, he took the trail with a bound and a grand bay, which made the snowy woods resound.

But he wallowed heavily, going in to his body at every leap. How long would he run? was the question.

We followed on; but Grip soon left us far behind. His deep-mouthed challengings, given every few seconds, led the way.

The Canada lynx is by no means a long-winded or very speedy animal. On good running, a hound will generally tree one in less than an hour, starting on a fresh trail; provided the lynx runs for the dog. Sometimes it will not budge an inch, especially if the dog comes upon it while eating any thing, or upon a female in charge of her kittens. I have known two instances, where the hound, tearing up on the scent, has been set upon at sight, and frightfully torn. Generally, however, they run before the dog: so, also, will the bear and the gray wolf. They seem to instinctively know that there is something more formidable behind.

The track first led off to a swamp, full of black, mucky holes with open water, to the north-west, distant

rather more than a mile; then, after a few doublings, went up boldly over a steep bluff crested with white birches; thence off to the side of a black mountain three or four miles away. The baying of the hound grew fainter as we proceeded. We began to be afraid we might utterly lose him in the wilderness.

Presently the regular *ough, ough!* ceased altogether. Nothing was heard for several minutes. I thought perhaps the chase had suddenly entered some deep ravine; but, a little farther on, we caught the echoes of a clear long-drawn howl.

"Hurrah!" Wade shouted. "Come up with him! Calling us! *Holed* him, or *treed* him!"

We hurried on with vast strides, following the sound, and making a straight cut for it. The Doctor began to puff alarmingly, and presently fell behind in spite of himself. Wade and Wash began to straggle too. Raedway and myself forged along, and got over a couple of miles in about twenty minutes.

A much nearer call from the hound told us we were coming up with him. We slackened our pace, and went on as quietly as possible. A few rods to the left, a thicket of low firs began to skirt the mountain-side. Making a slight *détour*, we got among these, and so worked up with slow steps, taking care not to stir the snowy boughs.

Pretty soon Raed whispered, "S-t-t! There they are!"

Looking out through a vista of snow and evergreen, I espied Grip, steaming wet, sitting under a great, rough hemlock, looking straight up into it. Following

his eyes, lo! there, on one of the large lower limbs which projected at nearly right angles from the trunk, up about twenty feet, crouched the lynx, its long gray body extended along the limb, and its head turned on one side, looking down at the dog. From where we stood, it looked to be a large creature. Stretched out as it was, its body seemed to be as much as four feet in length. On one side we could see its claws clutching the bark of the branch. They were as long as one's little finger.

"Isn't he a beauty?" Raed whispered, as a breath of wind stirred its long steely fur.

We heard the boys coming down in the woods below the thicket.

"Suppose he will jump out if he sees them?" questioned Raed.

He might; but we did not like to shoot before they had seen him. Raed stole cautiously back to warn them; while I held the rifle cocked, and ready to fire.

First Wash, and then Wade, came up from behind, and took a long look; finally Raed piloted in the Doctor, peering and open-mouthed. He had never seen one before; and, in his eagerness to get a good look at the "patient," he trod one racket on the other, and stumbled slightly, making the snow *crump*. Instantly the cat whirled on the limb, and ran down the trunk of the tree. We heard its claws *cut* into the rough bark. Grip bristled and bayed. The creature hesitated an instant when within ten or a dozen feet of the snow, growling loudly. I fired; but, even as I pulled the trigger, it leaped off over the dog's head with a snarl,

and plunged into the snow, making it fly lively. Grip wheeled with a quick, baffled bark of impatience, and sprang at the creature. But it was too spry for him, and rose clear of the snow with another leap, and another; the hound almost grappling with it at each fall, both growling. In a moment they were out of sight among the firs.

"Too bad!" muttered Wash.

"Too quick for you, Christopher," condoled the Doctor. "Dodged that ball like an eel!"

Raed was *loping* off in pursuit. We all followed, and had gone twenty rods, perhaps, when we heard Grip yelp out on a sudden as if the beast had turned upon him. The yelping was immediately followed by growls, and a general noise of fighting and worrying. Without stopping to even reload, I pushed on after Raedway, who had the other gun loaded with shot. We fairly ran, lumbering along Indian fashion; and, in a few seconds, came in sight of the game a long ways ahead. There sat the lynx, with its back to a snarl of brushy shrubs, facing the hound, its mouth open, panting and growling; while Grip, lolling too violently to bark, sat up not ten feet off. Both were now fairly out of breath, whatever had passed between them before we came in sight. The cat looked considerably the larger of the two. Its head was as big as a four-quart measure, seemingly. Even from where we stood, we could see its eyes glowing like spots of flame. The tasselled prick ears added to the ferocity of its aspect. Its snarls and growlings were much like those of a domestic cat as heard by night, intensified to correspond with the size.

Between them, they made the forest resound with any thing but melody.

"It won't do to fire," said Raed. "Might hit the hound. Besides, it's too far for me with shot. Load up, and let's work round to left."

Leaving Wash and Wade with the Doctor, Raed and I went off on a circuit, moving quietly, and keeping as much in the lee of the tree-trunks as possible, till we had come within a hundred yards of them. This position did not expose the dog. Holding the rifle-barrel against one of the spruce-trunks, I fired a second shot.

The creature cried out sharply, and darted at the hound. Together they rolled over and over in the snow, half burying themselves. Grip yelled; but, before we could come up, he had broken away, and run off with a pitiful yelp. The beast lay kicking and writhing in the snow, which was flecked all around with great bright red goutts of the most vivid-looking blood. It was still growling with wheezy, painful sounds, and trying hard to get up; in fact, kept getting up and tumbling over, wallowing, snapping, and snarling. Raed stepped forward, and, cocking one barrel of the shot-gun, fired it into the creature's head. But it kicked a long while after that, even; dying very hard, I should say; for my bullet from the rifle had smashed its shoulder, and gone clean through its breast. Before we dared to come near, it had sadly besmirched its fur with blood and the moist snow.

The other boys came up with the Doctor. Grip was limping about, whining with an occasional yelp and howl. He had several ugly scratches and *dogs* in the

stomach and neck. But the Doctor pronounced them "flesh-wounds" merely, — a verdict which seemed, however, in no way to relieve the poor dog's distress. I felt afraid that the punishing he had received would make him shy of the game for the future; but Wade laughed at the idea that a bloodhound of the regular "plantation breed" could be cowed by any thing short of a "square killing."

We now turned our attention to the game. The carcass was pulled up out of the snow, and, by means of a withe, hung up to a neighboring limb. It was not so heavy as it had looked to be. The long thick fur of this animal adds greatly to its apparent size. Wash and the Doctor set its weight at forty pounds. Raed thought it might fall a pound or two short of that estimate.\*

"Well, Doctor, what say to him?" said I.

"I should say," replied he, feeling one of its great fur-padded feet, whence the black points of its claws glistened, — "I should say that it must have been a long while since this chap has cut his finger-nails."

"Humph!" muttered Wash. "This brute no need to run from dogs, if he had the grit to face 'em; or from man, either. A man would hardly be a match for one of these creatures."

"Ever heard of their attacking men?" Raed asked.

I related the story I had heard of Mr. A. P. Gould of Boston, who had a desperate hand-to-hand fight with one (an old male lynx) a few years ago. Mr. Gould had only a butcher-knife; and the cat sprang upon him

\* See Field Notes at the end of this volume.



so suddenly, that he was near being throttled for a few minutes. However, by a lucky thrust he had the good fortune to kill the beast. And, about ten years since, one of the employés of the Grand Trunk Railroad had a smart tussle with one of these creatures. It was at a small "station" in the woods, not far from the "Canada line." The man had left the track, and gone to a brook, at a little distance, to drink. As there was no dipper, he got down on his *stomach*, after the primitive fashion, and was "sucking away;" when down dropped a lynx out of a tree leaning over the brook, and fastened its claws into his back. From the story the man afterwards told, it would appear that they had a pretty "warm time" of it. Finally he shook the creature off; but it followed him, growling, some distance, as if loath to give him up.

Still another instance occurred to an acquaintance of the writer's, who was one night passing along a lonely road at about nine o'clock. By way of *cane* he had a stout stick of hornbeam, as heavy as one could comfortably swing. It was a cloudy evening late in the fall. He couldn't see much; but, on passing where the road wound among some bushy clumps, he suddenly heard a snarling beside the way, and then saw two *bright spots* creeping up to him, growling and snarling viciously. Our friend (who was, by the way, an athletic young fellow, and feared nothing in the world so much as a certain pair of black eyes he was even then on his way to visit) up with his shillalah, and made a slashing charge on the growler, giving him a whack which fairly laid him out *imprimis*.

But the beast didn't stay laid out. Before our gallant could recover arms, the cat had got up, and jumped again (to use the identical phrase) like "a streak of greased lightnin'." However, our young friend's sturdy fist met it half way, knocking it back; when it received a second stroke from the hornbeam. This was repeated as many as four times, till the cat backed off into the brush.

But, as soon as our rustic night-boy essayed to move on, the lynx followed him, growling and "scolding;" sometimes stealing along the path behind, sometimes running on the log-fence which enclosed the road. Stoning wouldn't disperse him. He was bound to see "where that feller was goin';" in fact, followed him clean into the yard "where the old gent lived." But a more energetic sweetheart than *Hero* was awaiting our sorely-beset *Leander*. She sallied out to the rescue with the "ole man's" gun. Between them, they shot the varmint; and, said my friend, "'twas nothin' but a lucivee, after all."

"Now, there's a girl worth the courting," observed the Doctor meditatively. "Many of that sort down this way? Eh!"

"Getting rather scarce, Doctor."

"The more's the pity."

"Think so? Well, the fact is, the Leanders who would go from seven to nine miles through the woods by night have got scarce too."

"No doubt. The age degenerates."

"Do you really believe that, Doctor?" demanded Wash.

"There's no doubt of it."

Raed muttered something about the mere fact of a girl's shooting a lynx not constituting the acme of civilization, in his opinion.

But the Doctor drowned him out with a burst of social ethics. "The fact is, boys," he exclaimed, — "the fact is, — and there's no use trying to disguise it, — the fact is, that the Anglo-American population of this country is dying out, — going to seed.

"Where are the Pilgrims? where the good old days?  
Except the clergy, where's the man who prays?  
Alas! they're in the mansions of the blest, —  
All save a few who chose to go out West."

"Humph!" from Raed. "Doctor's an anti-progress man!"

"Not I! Quite the reverse. On the contrary, I believe in putting a warranty-deed of good health and long life in the hands of every man and every woman in these United States forthwith."

"Certainly, certainly!" we all acquiesced. And said Raed, turning to the game, "Who skins this lynx?"

We all made haste to attend to this duty, not caring to have the merits of the "sirup" *before the house* again.

The cat was skinned after a fashion. It is one of those disagreeable jobs which *must* be done, unless you hire a "skinner." And, when a party hires a skinner, Fortune almost always plays the trick of giving them nothing to skin. Never tempt *Providence* by hiring a skinner beforehand.

Got back to camp at a little after three, P.M., with our trophy. We were desperately hungry. It had been a long tramp, — a dozen miles, certainly, in all.

The Doctor had extracted two of the lynx's nails for mementoes. They were about two inches long, very retractile and sharp, — evidently made for close gripping.

The clouds had cleared. Up through the tree-tops gleamed a sky of the softest azure. The snow was "giving," and dropping off the boughs all about. The red squirrels had come out. At a distance we saw a marten chasing them. We had dinner and supper together at a little after sunset; and, feeling rather too tired for reading, turned in at a quarter before eight.

### THIRD DAY.

Colder. — The Hound in Bad Plight. — Shooting Hares. — Facts about the Northern Hare. — An Incident. — Setting the Traps. — The "Clog." — Glimpse of a Lynx. — A Fox. — Winter Fishing. — Cutting the Hole. — Angling through the Ice. — A Big Pickerel. — Wade's Adventure. — A Togue. — Raed spies an Unknown Animal.

TOWARD morning, somebody let the fire go out again. (What's everybody's business is often nobody's.) It had come up cold too. At sunrise, the thermometer indicated one degree below. Cold and misery are brothers. We got up pinched, shivering, and cross. Had a surly breakfast at a quarter after eight.

Coffee and the sun-rays thawed us out somewhat, — not very much: we still felt rather wintry, and not a little stiff from our excited trampings the previous day.

"Going to hunt 'em again this morning?" Wade inquired very dubiously.

Grip was sore from his scratches; the Doctor had cramp in his legs. On the whole, we concluded to lay over that day, and set the traps. Of these we had seven, such as had been previously used for foxes.

Four of these were new ones with more than ordinarily stiff springs. The three old ones I had had strengthened with extra springs.

While Wade and Raed got out the traps and the assafoetida, Wash and I went out to shoot hares for bait.

Hunting hares in the winter is a rather uncertain business. The animal is, during the snowy season, of so nearly the same color, that one may almost run over it unperceived, unless he happens to catch sight of its blinking brown eyes.

After a disappointing search of nearly half an hour, — during which time we crossed hundreds of tracks in the new snow, — we at last started a couple from under an overdrifted bush. They scuttled out, and went leaping noiselessly off; but, by a quick double-shot, we secured them both. One of them was about the largest hare I had ever seen. It would have weighed nine or ten pounds; whereas the average weight of our Northern hare does not exceed six pounds. The other was probably a last-summer leveret, not half the size of the old one.

Of the hare of our Northern Maine forests it should be remarked, that it differs considerably from the species found in Middle and Southern New England. It is larger, and swifter of foot. Furthermore, those found in the northern part of the State are larger than those of the seaboard; and, generally speaking, the higher up we go above the sea-level, — in this State, at least, — the larger we find the hare. The hare of Moosehead Lake and vicinity is about two feet and two

inches from the nose to the hind-feet. Its head is short, eye full, and forehead receding. The ears are long, large, and rather open; tail very short. The hind-legs are long, with but four toes: the fore-legs are short, with five toes. The feet are well covered with long, coarse hair, which makes a good brush, when dry, for many purposes. The hair on the body is also long and loose, always whiter under the body, and, in the winter, white all over. But in summer it is of a yellowish brown, varying to a red-brown. Next to the body there is a soft, loose fur of a silky texture, and leaden-colored on the back. This fur keeps its color constant. It is only the long hair that changes when the snows come. Little, timid, much-despised creatures that they are, they fill the wilderness to its full capacity of supporting them. They breed in myriads, and have no weapon of defence save flight. They are the prey of every prowler of the forest.

It is rare that one finds a hare in good condition. I never yet saw one that could be termed "fat."

Four years ago, while a party of us boys were camping at Seeboomook Meadows, we were obliged, from scarcity of game, to live on hare-venison for a week; and a pretty lean time we had of it too. We found the meat quite destitute of flavor, and, judging from our feelings, of nutrition as well. It is very light colored, and looks as poor as it tastes.

Hares multiply very fast. I never saw less than three in one litter; often there are five; and I once found six of the little fellows cuddled in a nest. Commonly there are four; and I know of no more amusing sight

than one of these families when the leverets are about a week old. The old hares are then very attentive and watchful, and will rise on their hind-legs to look around at the slightest sound. They rear two litters in a season.

Our Northern hare does not often burrow in the ground, but makes a nest of soft, dry grass and moss under a brush-heap, or beneath the thick foliage of low evergreens. The young nurse for about three weeks; when they gradually leave the nest and mother to take care of themselves. I have often picked them up in the woods; and, when you find one, you may be almost sure that the rest of the litter are within a few rods of you. They are born with a good dress of brown hair, eyes open, and teeth well cut through.

Hares live chiefly on the buds and tender twigs of small bushes and annual plants. They are especially fond of yellow-birch twigs.

The voice of the hare, when frightened or hurt, is a shrill, high note, uttered rapidly on the same key. It has a very sad, plaintive sound. Some have compared it to the filing of a saw in a saw-mill. They also emit a low, peculiar grunt when near each other, which seems to be a sort of language, by means of which they make known their wishes and wants.

A camp-fire always attracts them. While "camping out," we used frequently to shoot them in the evening, after we had lain down and every thing was still. They would then come up in sight of the fire. They stamp with the feet like sheep, the sound of which, when they are jumping about a camp, often resembles the steps of



a heavy animal. I recollect one night, while we were at Mt. Katahdin, that we all got a fright from one that came into our camp, and leaped plump upon one of the boys while asleep. He sprang up with a shout, which waked us all in a twinkling. It was some minutes before we found out that it was only a rabbit that had charged upon us.

Hunters depend almost wholly on the hare for bait for their traps, when trapping the larger game.

While at our old camp at Seeboomook Meadows, I remember that one evening we wanted to set a trap for a wild-cat that had been hanging round for several nights. To bait it, we needed a hare; and, as there were plenty of them all about us, I caught up a pole, and ran out to knock one over. But I had to go farther than I had expected to find one, as is generally the case.

It was growing dusk, and I was about turning back, when I happened to espy one "budding" from a low bush several rods ahead. Between me and him there were a couple of largish stones. I crouched down and crept up, keeping out of sight behind them. Reaching the stones, I peeped over: there sat the hare, not a rod off, browsing leisurely. He hadn't heard me. I was just raising my pole to hit him, when from behind a little shrub-spruce there bounded out a big lynx with an eager, raspy growl. The hare doubled about, and then dived into a hole under some old roots close beside the stones behind which I was hiding.

The lynx tore and dug at the roots a moment; then, finding he couldn't get at the hare, stood up, and fairly screeched with rage. He was a savage-looking chap.

I kept quiet, and was not sorry to see the creature walk off.

After considerable beating about, Wash started a third, which leaped a few rods, then stopped, and sat looking at him. I came up with the gun, and shot it. Picking him up, we started to go back; and had got within a hundred yards of the camp, when a fourth bobbed out from under a fir almost exactly upon the trail we had gone out on. There was no second track; from which we inferred that the hare had been lying quietly there while we had passed, almost stepping on the fir. Indeed, it is well to carry a long, sharp stick to try the snow-buried shrubs with. Often they will be found to shelter a hare that has been "rusticated" there for a day or two. Especially will this be found to be the case immediately succeeding a heavy fall of snow. Securing this fourth animal, we rejoined our companions with some twenty-five or thirty pounds of venison, which, however innutritious as an article of human diet, would do very well for trap-bait.

The boys were waiting for us rather impatiently. Impatience is the common lot of waiters, — unprofessional ones, at least. The Doctor had been down to the "hool" (in the ice) after water. He had discovered fish in the lake. While he had stood looking down into the hole, a fish's head had popped up to seize a crumb or bit of something floating there.

"And I propose, boys," said he, "to divert our toils by the practice of the 'gentle art.' Fresh trout would be a gracious luxury even at our sumptuous tables."

"So we might!" cried Wash. "What's to hinder?"

"Nothing; unless it is lack of hooks," Raed observed.

As fishing through the ice is a favorable winter pastime in Northern Maine, I had, at the outset, be-thought myself to take a few stout lines with hooks.

It was immediately agreed to set the traps, and, after dinner, go fishing. All hands, therefore, got on rackets, and set out, carrying traps, bait, guns, axe, &c. We left Grip tied up to heal his wounds.

A hundred rods north of the camp we saw where a lynx had gone past not many hours previous. But, having fired repeatedly during the morning, we supposed it would be better to take the traps to a considerable distance; and accordingly kept on to where the swamp we had crossed the preceding morning extended back to the northward, between the mountains and the wooded headlands along the lake-shore.

After the snow gets to be three and four feet deep, not only the lynx, but all sorts of game, take naturally to the low, densely-thicketed lands, which offer a more secure retreat than the open woods. The swamp was full of cedar and hackmatack, which, with its trailing mosses, formed a succession of pale-green, gauze-like curtains.

Here we found a perfect congeries of tracks and trails netting up the snow, and crossing each other in every direction. In some places about the open, mucky spots, the snow was trodden hard by the scores of wild feet which had come either for drink or prey. All about were the traces of many a death-struggle,—bits of gray fur, and hares' feet by the dozen. Here and there a *pud-*

*dle* of feathers showed that some incautious partridge had been stolen upon, or perhaps dug out of the snow where it had *dived* for refuge from the storm; lynx-tracks by the half-dozen, sometimes leaping, as if in full chase or on a frolic, but more frequently walking slowly and catlike, with footprints as large as one's fist struck knuckles down into the snow, and not four inches apart.

There were also other tracks of nearly the same size, but of rather different shape, made by some creature we were not quite certain of. And at one place we saw tracks, seemingly rather largely than those of a lynx, made one after the other, like a fox-track, nearly two feet apart as the creature walked. Wash was sure this was a catamount: the Doctor inclined to that opinion; but the rest of us chose rather to regard it as a large lynx, or possibly a gray wolf. Occasionally a very large lucivee is found in this region, — some old male, gaunt and tall as the largest of hounds. Then there were marten-trails from tree to tree; for, besides the cedar and hackmatack, there were standing about tall, unhealthy-looking black ashes, sixty and even a hundred feet in height, with scarcely any top save the one mossy stem beset with warts and gnarls.

Yet, despite all these signs of game, we saw nothing save an occasional squirrel barking noisily from his perch. The quick eyes or ears of the larger quadrupeds had detected our approach ere we had caught sight of them.

We set two of the traps beside one of the open holes, baiting each with half a hare, suspended from a branch four or five feet over the trap. The bait was

first cut and rendered gory, then scented with assafoetida. The trap was set, and the chain attached to a black-ash "clog" about four feet long, and weighing, for a guess, thirty pounds.

If the chain is made fast to a tree or root, both the lynx and the bear will very frequently, in the first fright and fury of the trap's springing, either tear their feet out from between the jaws, or else break the chain. Hunters generally deem it safer to chain on a clog. The beast will then start off on a run, dragging it, and thus spend its strength till fairly tired down, when it may be approached and killed. Often, however, this method implies a long tramp to come up with the game. A bear will frequently go six miles with trap and clog; and sometimes, even then, free himself by smashing the trap to pieces on a rock. An old fellow of my acquaintance tells me that he has lost two large bear-traps in this way. The bear seemed to have deliberately pounded the trap on a stone till it fell off its foot, — a pretty good thing for a bear to do, certainly! For your clumsy, honest old bear is not, to tell the truth, either the most witty or the most intelligent of quadrupeds; at least, it strikes me so from such observation of its habits as I have been able to make.

To conceal the traps as much as possible, and banish the scent, we strewed them over with partridge-feathers from one of the "puddles."

Going on, we set another in a narrow run beside still another of the steaming muck-holes. This one we disguised with moss from one of the hackmatacks, scented with assafoetida.

Farther along we set two around the place where a fox had been killed and the half-gnawed bones lay scattered about. The inhabitants of these wilds seem scarcely to live in that state of primitive peace and felicity which marked the golden age. They are essentially biters and devourers of each other. How the poor little hare — the prey of them all, from the marten to the bear — manages to live at all is a daily wonder to me. But live it does. Its track, even in this den of rapine, is the most numerous of all. But its life must consist of one continuous series of dodgings and doublings. Savage eyes hunt it by day and by night. The common tradition is, that it sleeps with one eye open, and one ear retroverted.

Leading up out of the swamp on the north-west side, we came upon a beaten lynx-trail. Evidently a great many of these creatures made this a sort of public highway from the mountain to the swamp. We followed it up for nearly half a mile, and set the two remaining traps at intervals.

We had a momentary glimpse of a lynx disappearing among the tree-trunks at a distance, and, while going back along, espied a solitary wayfarer of a red fox trotting off with jaunty brush carried well up out of the snow.

Bears we hardly expected to see at this season. Bruin keeps his den and sucks his paw (so hunters say) during the colder months, thus keeping up a sort of circle of nutrition.

It is said also that the bear, at the approach of winter, fills its stomach with *spruce-gu* ʔ, — a substance not

easily digested, certainly. On the strength of this "cud" it sustains life till warmer weather. I do not know whether this theory was ever established by actual dissection of a bear's stomach, or not. I have heard woodsmen argue it from the fact that they had seen spruce-trees with the gum scratched off at the height of four, five, and seven feet from the ground. But one frequently meets with hemlock and maple trunks scratched in the same manner. Nearly all of the wild carnivora, including also the domestic cat, have the habit of "sharpening their claws" in this way. On two occasions I have seen the lynx do the same thing. Before starting off on a hunt, they will get up, stretch, and proceed to sharpen up, just as every one has so often seen old Tabby do it against a kitchen-chair.

After dinner — which, by the by, differed but very little from breakfast or supper — we got out our fishing-tackle, and, with nothing better than a chunk of beef for bait, went down to the "hool" to fish for the Doctor's trout. A hook was baited and dropped in. As the hole was not more than a couple of rods from the shore, and the water not over three or four feet deep, I was not nearly so much surprised as the Doctor seemed to be that there were no bites.

After these lakes freeze, the fish keep mostly in the deeper portions, off from the cold shores. Some heat is always finding its way up from the interior fire-reservoirs of the earth. The *sinks* of the lakes, which are often fifty and a hundred feet in depth, are, consequently, warmer than the shoaler reaches. These are the places to be tapped by the fisherman. On a strange lake it

takes a tolerably good eye for topographical features to hit upon these sinks. Their locality is generally indicated, to some extent, by the formation of the shores. Still one may often guess wrong. Depressions under water do not always correspond to hills above.

Not to be baffled, we went back for our snow-shoes; and, taking our axe and the impromptu snow-shovel which the mechanical genius of Mr. Raedway had manufactured from a section of pine-log, we started down the lake.

About half a mile below our position, and out, perhaps, three hundred meters from the shore, there were a couple of small islands covered with low bushes and a few shaggy pitch-pines. Passing these, we went on for near three-fourths of a mile, till we were off opposite the place where the swamp bordered the lake. On the lower side of the bog as it extended along the lake, and near the foot of a sort of hummock, there was a patch of open water, — a very unusual circumstance at this season and at this latitude, and one only to be occasioned by the entry of some warm stream from a mucky swamp.

Seeing this open stretch, I knew there would be likely to be fish about it. The light, and also the warmth of the water, would attract them. So, going up to twelve or fifteen rods of the open water, from which the bright sunshine was reflected with mirrorlike faithfulness, we selected a place. Wash then shovelled out the snow from a spot about six feet square. The snow itself was towards three feet in depth: so that, by the time he had got down to the ice, he stood within a sort of "rifle-pit," piled all around with the chunks he had removed, and



showing only his head to outsiders. Getting down into this pit, Raed and I began the job of cutting a hole.

I may remark that we three generally had to do the *work* part. Wade never much affects the development of that industrial lubricant commonly known as "elbow grease." And as for the Doctor, we regarded him as an *emeritus* personage, — excused by courtesy from manual labor. But honors of this sort are at best rather doubtful ones on the forty-fifth parallel in January. To stand idle means to stand and shiver. The worker is decidedly the best off: work means warmth and comfort. But people do not readily part with long-standing prejudices.

It took some thirty minutes to cut through; for the scarf had to be constantly cleared of the loose chip-pings. Then, waiting a few moments to get breath and let it settle, we skimmed out the floating bits, and had at our feet, down thirty or thirty-two inches, a hole of about fifteen inches diameter, at the bottom of which the water looked black as ink. No ray of light penetrates the thick strata of snow and ice. Beneath them the waters are as dark as if no sun had ever shone to give the colors birth. All inert matter is black, I suppose; or, as Wade epigrammatically puts it, "Nature was a nigger till the sun shone."

Wash baited his hook and dropped in, slowly paying out twelve or fifteen feet of the line. In less than three minutes, there came so smart a tug as to nearly twitch him into the hole. He held on, however. We grabbed at the line to assist him. All five of us had a hand on it, down on our knees, and sprawling about the

hole. The fish had fairly hooked himself, and now surged from side to side with amazing spitefulness, fretting the line against the sharp edges of the ice, and sawing it into our fingers. For a few moments, it was as sharp a fight as I ever witnessed.

"Must be a walloper, boys!" cried the Doctor, barely saving his cap from going into the hole.

Gradually it got more docile; and Wash drew it up to the ice. But, just as its head came in sight, it made a second bolt, and, jerking the slack line through Wash's fingers, ran off fifteen or twenty feet before he could renew his hold. Where the line slid through his hand it cut the skin in two or three places, so sharp was the friction. Raed caught hold again, and they drew it up more gradually. Raising it to the surface, they lifted it out, — we were all gazing expectantly, — one, two, nearly three feet long! — a grand old pickerel, savage as a wolf, and snapping with a mouth like an alligator's. It is no exaggeration to say that one might have put his gloved fist into its mouth. Indeed, a pickerel comes as near being "all mouth" as any creature in existence. It is the shark of our fresh-water ponds and lakes. The name itself would seem to be a diminutive of the word "pike," to which family of fishes the pickerel belongs.

This one must have weighed nearly or quite eight pounds. The hook was firmly caught in its gills. It lay gasping on the ice at our feet. Nobody cared to lay hands on it; but, after it had grown tolerably quiet, Wade essayed to disengage the hook. Even then it snapped, perhaps spasmodically rather than from design; and, if his hand had not been thickly gloved, he would

have been severely scratched by the rough serrated teeth. Raed dug a hole in the snow-wall of our "pit;" and we thrust it in to keep it from *flopping* back down the hole. But it did not rest quiet in its snowy cell. We heard it squirming at intervals for nearly half an hour.

The wind had begun to blow; and along the crust the loose snow came creeping and sifting in upon us. Wash climbed out, and, taking the shovel, piled up a breastwork on the windward side high enough to shield our heads.

Shortly after the wind began to *pipe*, the water in the hole began to discharge bubbles; great ones too, and a multitude of them, — *plop-plop, plop-plop!* The Doctor had dropped in his hook; so had Wade. As three lines in one hole was about as many as could conveniently manœuvre, Raed and myself stood by as supernumeraries; ready, however, to bear a hand in case of "big bites."

The Doctor presently hooked a small pickerel, weighing, perhaps, a pound and a half; and Wash caught another two-pounder. But, after catching an eight-pound fish, there was nothing very exciting in such catches — for lookers-on. Raed was looking out of one pit, eyeing the silent, wooded shores which enclosed the vast white lake. Presently he touched my elbow.

"Game!" he whispered, pointing off across the open water to the foot of the low hummock which cornered on the swamp and the lake.

"Where?" said I; for I did not at first detect any thing.

"On that old pine-stump up a little from the water. Don't you see it sitting there?"

I did now, distinctly, — a long-bodied animal, black as a crow. It sat crouching in a singular sort of way

"Watching us," said Raed.

It seemed to be.

"What is it?" he queried.

I hardly knew.

"Must be a *fisher*, I think," said he, taking out his glass.

"Yes" (after a look), "I guess that's a fisher fast enough."

I took the glass; but it did not look much like a fisher. It was seemingly too long-bodied. Its ears were too small; and it had a very large, broad muzzle: so, at least, it seemed to me from where we stood.

"Suppose he would show fight if we were to go round there?" Raed questioned. "Chance for a fancy shot, at any rate. Distance two hundred meters, more or less. Let's see you drop him off that stump with the rifle."

"What's up?" exclaimed Wade, overhearing the conversation, and turning from the hole.

"Another cat, is it?" cried the Doctor facetiously.

"Is that a fisher, Wash?" said I.

Wash turned from his line: they had all three turned, leaving their lines hanging in the water. Wash thought, with me, that it was too broad a nose for a fisher; and Raed was saying, that perhaps we had best not frighten it by firing, but bring down a trap and set for it, when a great jerk of Wade's person from behind reminded him rather forcibly of his line.

“A bite!”

The jerk was followed by another, which tugged him so violently, that he took a leap across the hole perforce. The mouth of the hole was slippery; and, a third strong surge at the line succeeding at almost the same moment, one foot slipped in, and down he went to his body with a most agonized expression of countenance. We all lay hold of him on the instant. Indeed, the hole was hardly large enough to take him through. [Here allow me to add a word of advice to winter fishermen on our lakes: Never cut a hole big enough to let yourself through: it is better not to give the fish undue advantages.] Wade hadn't let go the line: it was wound round his hand. We pulled him out, and all seized hold with him; but such downright forceful tugs I never felt from a fish. He made us all dance round the hole. Any ordinary line would have snapped like thread; but this was a genuine cod-line, such as we had used on board the yacht. The water fairly boiled in the hole. But gradually the fish spent its strength, and merely hung back mulishly when we tried to pull it up, with an occasional run off. We drew it in, and, after several unsuccessful efforts, got its head entered at the bottom of the hole. It was then lifted out, — a noble fish, a true *togue-trout*. I hope none of my readers will think I am telling a “fish-story” when I say that that trout would have weighed *seventeen* pounds if an ounce.\* But from living so long under the ice, where there was little or no light, the spots on its sides and

\* Togue-trout have been taken from these lakes, weighing thirty-five pounds, on at least two occasions.

back had faded; all its colors had paled; its fins were almost white: but it was, nevertheless, in good condition. The Doctor was greatly elated.

"Fish enough for one day!" cried he, spitting his wet hands.

"But our black friend has slipped away during the fracas," Raed remarked.

Sure enough, the creature had disappeared from the stump.

It was getting toward sunset.

"We shall hardly have time to bring a trap and set for him to-night," said Wash.

So we put the matter over for the next day, and went back to camp with our fish.

Togue-trout are a very fine table-fish. We boiled about one-half this one that evening, and ate it all (save the bones) with butter and cracker-fixings. Of course, we had rare appetites; but I doubt whether a more toothsome dish could have been set out at any hotel in the State. Sitting there on the hemlock in our camp-door, we supped in barbarous profusion, with a huge, roaring red fire warming up the whole place, and a strong odor of burning pine pervading all the air.

Along in the night some time, the Doctor awoke us. He had got up to mend the fire.

"Just come out here a minute, and *hark!*" he was saying.

One after another, we scrambled out. Off in the woods, in the direction of the swamp it seemed, there was a caterwauling of some sort going on. A cold wind blew fitfully; but in the intervals of the gusts we could

hear sounds of feline disturbance, sometimes distinct, then seemingly distant and far-borne.

"Guess some of 'em are in our traps," said Wash. "Got their toes pinched."

We stood listening for some minutes. On a sudden there was a wild, sharp scream, piercing as the screech of a file, followed immediately by a chorus of yawlings.

"It's a fight!" muttered Raed.

"That screeching is just such a noise as I heard the other night," remarked the Doctor. "This isn't a very peaceful country, I'm afraid."

The sounds ceased after a while. We listened a few minutes longer; then replenished the fire, and went back to bed,—not before Wash had expressed his stereotyped opinion, that "that last screech was made by nothing less than a catamount."

Heard in the night, such noises are rather startling.

## FOURTH DAY.

Fried Pickerel. — We go to visit the Traps. — A Disappointing State of Things. — A Clew to the Screechings. — Trap gone. — On the Trail. — A Long and Imprudent Chase. — The Game turns up most Unexpectedly. — A Lively Tussle. — Supperless. — A Night out. — A Cold Time of it. — Grim Hunger.

**B**REAKFAST (fried pickerel and steak) over, we set off to visit the traps.

We were all expectant. The noise in the night was sufficient to excite curiosity, if nothing else. With queer feelings of whimsical anticipation, and not without cautious glances ahead, we drew near the place where we had set the first two traps.

But they were just as we had left them; and, with our extravagant expectations somewhat dashed, we went on to the next, which was likewise unmolested.

“Humph!” grumbled Wash. “They know too much for us!”

But, on coming out where we had set the two traps around the fox-bones, we found a different state of things. There lay one of the traps sprung, and thrown all in a heap; and a little way off we found the other, also sprung, with the black foot and shank of some animal fast in the jaws; and not only this foot, but there



were also gnawed bones, and bits of black fur, lying all about. Half a dozen yards away, Wade espied a rather long black tail, evidently gnawed off near the body, and rejected.

"Well, I'll be blessed!" was the Doctor's comment. "Eaten up, and the bones picked!"

"But what sort of a beast do you call that?" demanded Raed.

Judging from the foot, the tail, and the claws, I thought it might have been a fisher (*Mustela Canadensis*). Evidently it had got into our trap, and there been eaten up alive by some larger beast. Possibly this fisher had been the captor of the fox whose bones he had come back to repick, and thus got into the trap. A fisher would have no difficulty in mastering a fox, once he had caught it; but the animal is a slow one. Its short legs unfit it for the chase.

"Suppose that was the tussle we heard from camp last night?" Wash queried.

It seemed quite possible.

"But what ate him up?" questioned the Doctor, turning the bones with the nose of his racket.

"That's telling," laughed Raed.

I suggested that it might very likely have been a drove of lynxes; for these animals often go in small packs of from four to eight.

But Wash couldn't believe that it was lynxes, and assured us that it was "nothing less than a panther."

We might have been able to have made a guess from the tracks; but the snow all about was fairly trodden hard. There were plenty of lynx-tracks to be identified

off at a little distance, coming in and going off from the place; also many others not so easily made out, for the trails intersected and overran each other in every direction.

After the manner of more professional hunters, we reset the traps, and went on to the lynx-trail leading up the side of the mountain. The first of the traps set here was as we had left it; but the bait, which had been suspended to a bough over it, was gone, and the bough broken down. Whatever prowler had taken it, he had also taken good care to keep his feet off the trencher.

Going on to the second and farthestmost, we found it gone, — bait, clog, and all: in fact, we had some perplexity in determining the place. But, a little higher up, Wade espied where the creature left the beaten trail, and ran off toward a thicket at some distance, dragging the clog after it.

"He's in that thicket!" exclaimed Wash. "Let's surround him!"

"But you don't know what it is yet," Raed observed. "It may be one of your catamounts, Wash."

"You needn't laugh, fellows," retorted Wash. "It would be no joke to have one of those panthers drop down on our backs from a tree-top."

We all heartily concurred with him that it would be no joke.

Raed and I moved off to the right, making a *détour* of several hundred yards to come round on the west side of the thicket, leaving the other two boys with the Doctor to follow up the trail the creature had made. Wade had the rifle; Raed and I had the double-bar-

relled gun. It was a clump of firs, covering, perhaps, an acre. We closed in cautiously, having little doubt that the lynx was in cover of it, watching our movements.

Meanwhile the other boys had come up on the south side. We could hear them *shooing*. But nothing stirred. Then they began to throw dead limbs and old knots to "make him skurry." We didn't much like to push in among the thick evergreen, where, possibly, the beast might be lurking, all ready to jump. But we had our labor and caution for our pains merely; for the cat had gone out on the south-west side. Wash and the Doctor, skirting the thicket on the left, came upon the trail, and shouted to us.

Then we all set off again; and descending into a ravine full of alders, winding among which was a brawling brook murmuring hoarsely under the ice, we climbed the opposite side, and came out upon another hemlock-thicket, into which the lynx had dragged the trap. Not to be taken in a second time, however, we passed immediately around the thicket, and found where the creature had come out of the hemlock, near a clump of large basswoods, one of which it seemed to have tried to climb; but the clog had probably proved too heavy.

By this time it was about noon. We were three miles from camp.

"Oh, why hadn't we taken a lunch!" groaned Wade.

"What's to be done?" was the question. It seemed rather unsportsmanlike to leave the trail to go back for dinner. Whether dinner was really worth a tramp of six miles was doubtful. [Before the next morning, we had less doubt on the subject.]

"I move we push on," said Raed. And, after a brief halt, we did so, and, for the next two hours, tramped steadily forward, over ridges, down into gullies, following the heavy trail. Wherever a thicket showed itself among the old growth, the cat had made for it, only to abandon it after a brief rest.

From such indications as the track afforded, I judged that the lynx was several hours in advance of us. But we had all along expected to come up with it after every few hundred yards. It seemed impossible that the animal could keep on so far and so steadily — on three legs — with the trap and a clog, which could hardly have weighed less than thirty pounds. The snow, too, was deep and soft. The creature went in to its belly at every leap.

After resting a few minutes, we set out again. We were now fairly in for it. To go back was to lose all we had done. The situation raised a certain point of honor or spunk. To go on now seemed the only thing we could consistently do, though we were getting rather faint from want of dinner.

For the next hour the track meandered up the side of a long saddle-backed mountain, clad toward the summit with an airy growth of white birch and poplar, with here and there a beech, to which the dry leaves still clung, rustling drearily in the winter wind. From the top of the ridge we looked off over a vast snowy wilderness to the north-west. At the foot of it was a small pond, not more than a couple of miles in length, girt about with the usual belt of melancholy alders. Without a word, Raed strode off down the slope toward the pond; and,

with merely a fumble in my pockets to see if I had matches, I followed the rest. But I knew we were preparing hardships for ourselves.

Adown the mountain-side the cat had gone with long leaps. Often, in plunging into the snow, we saw where the momentum of the clog and trap had sent it heels over head. The snow would be all trodden down in spots where the poor brute had scrambled about, trying, no doubt, to free itself. Here and there, too, the snow was blotched with blood where the tightly-gripping iron jaws had worn at its unlucky leg.

By the time we had got down to the pond-shore, the sun had set behind the dark spruce ridges on the other side. The trail, as discerned in the twilight, led right out across the pond; and, as the animal was nowhere to be seen along the snow-bound ice, it was apparent that it had entered the woods along the other shore.

Here we drew up, with dubious glances into each other's faces.

Had we not better halt here, build a fire, and try to get through the night as comfortably, or as little uncomfortably, as possible? I presumed that the Doctor was about used up. But he unexpectedly showed *blood*.

"Boys," said he, "one spurt more!" and struck out upon the ice.

We strode after him.

It was rather over half a mile across, — a thousand meters, according to Raed's method of estimating distance. Dusk was falling over this whole wild, vast, snowy region as we climbed up through the alders and entered among the dark spruces. Keeping on for ten

minutes more, the snow-crested crags of a long mountain, forming the wall of the pond-basin on the northwest side, began to show. The larger spruces thinned out among fallen rocks of prodigious proportions, which had rolled down from the crags. The snowy heads of these boulders showed over a black scrub-growth, and gave a singular, wild look to the darkening landscape. The Doctor was still ahead. He seemed determined to show us what he could do, and stuck to the trail like a hound. He pushed on through the dark evergreen, which, frozen hard, brushed our faces like a rasp, and tangled our rackets. We were close behind. Raed was next to him. The other two boys were behind me. We were hurrying forward.

All at once there was a rush, a growl, quick as a flash! I heard the Doctor shout out. Raed was pushing through the boughs. They flew back in my face. At the same instant, he either stumbled or jumped back against me, the tails of his rackets treading down the noses of mine. We both blundered over in the snow, and scrambled to get up.

The Doctor was calling for help, help! the cat snarling and miawling, and the trap rattling. Wash dashed past us, cocking the rifle; and I got up on one knee in time to see the Doctor flat on his back in the snow, half buried, with both feet kicking up, and the rackets dangling like a couple of Choctaw shields. The lynx, trap and all, was partly on him, grabbing and tearing at the rackets and his legs. He kicked so vigorously, that the beast couldn't get down to his face. All the time, too, he was squalling like a "sweet six-



"HELP! HELP!"





teen" for "help." Wash charged up, and fired the rifle in the cat's face. Never touched it, either. [It was afterwards shown that the ball cut through the "spread" of one of the Doctor's snow-shoes.] The lynx, blind with fury and pain, let go the Doctor, and darted at Wash before he could so much as strike once. Over they both went into the light snow. Wash gave a horrified yell, mightily like a dog's. Raed had got one foot right; but his other toe was out of the strap. He gave a grand bound; but couldn't quite make a *get-up* of it, and tumbled over on his side. I caught the gun out of his hands, and clubbed it to strike down the brute, when somebody fired from close behind. The hot smoke flew in my face. The lynx yawled, and rose up to spring; but I cracked it over the head with the gun-stock so sharply, that it fell down, clanking the trap. Before I could have repeated the blow, it was up again, and would have jumped, had not Wade, who had caught the rifle from Wash's prostrate grasp, dealt it a second stunner. Then we both laid on to it *whackerty-whack!* a dozen blows. It lay stunned; dead, perhaps: but, to make a sure thing of it, I fired a charge of shot into its head, which did the business effectively. Raed had got up *completely* this time. The Doctor and Wash had got partly up.

"Hurt, Doctor?" "Hurt, Wash?" we all cried out in tones of solicitude.

Wash declared himself unhurt; but he had a bad scratch across the back of his left hand, either from the lynx's claws or something else, and several very severe lacerations in his coat-sleeves.

"Did he scratch *you*, Doctor?" Raed demanded.

The Doctor had got on his legs (with another very snowy back); but he was hiccupping violently.

"He (hic) didn't get (haec) at my (hoc) throat, exactly; but (hiccup) the varmint's head took me (a whole string of hics) between wind and water when he first jumped. Knocked my breath out, just about."

"Eat some snow, Doctor," Wade advised.

"Hold up the first two fingers of your right hand, and count forty," amended Raed. "That'll cure 'em."

"But who fired that second shot?" said I. "That's what astonished me."

"It was my pistol," said Wade.

"Doctor, what's the matter with the bottoms of your pants?" Raed inquired.

We all naturally looked as directed. The Doctor's trousers-legs, from the knee down, were all slit to pieces. Done by the creature's claws.

Gradually we were able to get a long breath. The beast was dead now, certainly; but the fright it gave us will not soon be forgotten.

The Doctor averred, that, the first he saw of the beast, *he beheld it coming* in mid-air.

Our thoughts began to revert to our present situation,—eleven miles from camp, with night closing in. Not a pleasant *status* of affairs.

"We could hardly find our way back, even were we not too tired to do it," Raed remarked.

To camp, and pass the night somehow, was the only alternative. We had no axe with us. This aggravated our case. For our fire, we should be dependent on what-

ever dry wood might be picked up above the snow. Not to lose time, we sallied out in different directions before it should become too dark. Raed and I were together; and, even after going thirty or forty rods, we found nothing fit to feed a fire any length of time.

"Shall have to go fireless to bed," Raed was repeating, with a dolorous attempt in the comic vein, when we heard Wade calling at a distance.

"*This way, this way!*" the dark woods were echoing.

Coming up, we found him pulling bright splinters from the stump of a broken spruce which had fallen upon several smaller ones, crushing them down with it. The boughs were dry. We broke them off by the armful; and these, with the splinters, contributed fuel for a brisk blaze, which was soon crackling about the slivered stump. We then cut a profusion of green boughs with our pocket-knives, and piled the snow with them.

Meanwhile Wash and the Doctor had dragged along the carcass of the lynx; and, having no supper to engross our attention, we proceeded to take its "jacket" off by the light of our fire, having first hung the carcass up to a neighboring bough. We performed this "last office," as Wash called it, with the greater haste, because we did not wish the body to get cold and become rigid.

It makes me shudder as I write when I think of the way we got through that night. Our fire was, with our utmost efforts, but a poor one. We all five lay down on the boughs before it, and snuggled together as lovingly as puppies. But, despite all "cuddling," we were far

from comfortably warm. I don't think any of us went fairly to sleep. We were each too cold and hungry, and generally miserable, for slumber.

Ah! that was a wretched night. We cringed there torpid with chill; and the long hours crawled on. We didn't say much. Recalling it, I seem to see the gory body of the cat hanging there before our eyes, — a ghastly spectacle in the flickering light. Long before morning, it was frozen hard.

I doubt whether ever transported convict hailed the last day of his exile with greater joy than we beheld the first faint streaks of daylight that morning. As soon as it was barely light, we took our "pelt," and started back on our trail.

Judge, reader, if you can, how faint and hungry we must have been. Yet the walk was preferable to lying there *shivering*. After a few fruitless efforts at a joke, we subsided into silence, and plodded on, on, on, doggedly. That was a long-to-be-remembered tramp. If I recollect aright, it lacked a few minutes of nine when we at length reached camp.

## FIFTH DAY.

A Question of Eating or Sleeping. — Coffee and Hasty-Pudding. — A Snooze. — A Start. — An Unexpected Visitor. — Mr. Durkee and his very Exciting Tales of the "Lucivee."

READER, were you ever in the condition that you didn't know whether to eat, or go to bed? — hungry enough to faint, tired enough to drop?

For my own part, I felt undecided: I think we all did. So we appealed to the Doctor, as medical adviser, to tell us which we ought to do first. "Hang it all," quoth this disciple of Æsculapius, "we ought to take something warm into our stomachs immediately! But who cares? I'm half dead with fatigue!"

And, by way of illustrating his prescription, he stumbled into the shelter, and flung himself on the blankets.

But Raed and the rest of us took a more sensible view, I hope. There was no doubt that the Doctor's professional opinion was worth something.

"Let's have coffee, anyway," said Wash.

"And a hasty-pudding," Wade added; this latter "staple" being a dish of which he is particularly fond.

"It rests lightly on the stomach; digests easily: we can go to sleep on it, with no danger from apoplexy," he urged.

"Hasty-pudding it is," said Raed, "with sugar only."

"Coffee and hasty-pudding for five!" exclaimed Wash, seizing the axe to split up wood. "Oh, if we had only had the axe and this dry pine with us last night! *Oo-o-o-ogh!*"

A fire was kindled: and, in course of half an hour, the pudding was ready; also the coffee.

Poor Grip had been whining dolefully. We had left him tied to keep him out of the traps. He, too, had gone supperless. No doubt he had been lonesome. Wade hastened to give him a breakfast of beef and half a hare, — frozen.

Raed got the Doctor up; and we broke our long fast with a relish; then "fixed" the fire, and turned in for a snooze. By this time it was ten o'clock. . . .

A noise — it was Grip barking out gruffly — awoke me. A man was standing in the doorway, — a man with a fur cap pulled over his ears; and, the appearance of a man being an occurrence quite unlooked for, I got up somewhat hastily. But it was a jovial, good-humored face that was looking in upon us.

"Halloo!" it said.

"Halloo!" said I. "What's wanted?"

"Oh! nothing. Saw your camp: thought I'd just look in. Dog tied?" (For Grip was growling ominously.)

I made haste to assure him that the hound was hard and fast, and bade him "come in." His genial phiz was recommendation enough. The other boys were rousing up.

"Thanks," said he; and then (well aware, no doubt,

that strangers in these wilds are generally expected to give an account of themselves), "Name Durkee, — W. H. Durkee: at your service, gentlemen. Am 'boss' of a lumber-camp up here on the 'Black Stream.' Was going down to the settlement. Saw your smoke from the top of the ridge back here: so came round. Trapping?" with a nod to the two "pelts" hanging against the evergreen on the back-side of our camp.

I explained in the affirmative. Meanwhile the other boys and the Doctor were getting up, with as friendly nods as persons fresh from sleep could be expected to give. The Doctor shook hands with him, incidentally remarking that *it had the appearance of being a fine day*. "Yes, yes; so it does," said Durkee, laughing heartily. "So it does — what there is left of it. But you all seem to be taking it easy here."

Raed detailed the causes of our seeming sloth.

"Ah! you didn't have your *clog* heavy enough," was Mr. Durkee's comment. "Tell ye, they'll drag a big one! Muscular animal, those *lucivees*!"

But when the Doctor, in his happy-go-lucky style, came to tell how the lynx had jumped at him, Durkee's amusement was unbounded.

"Puts me in mind," he exclaimed, "of the first scrimmage I ever had with one of them, — more than a dozen years ago, when I lived at home, down in Upton Plantation, Oxford County. My father was one of the first settlers there. These 'lucivees' — as we always used to call 'em — were thick as rabbits all about; but they never troubled us much till" —

"Hold on, hold on!" I exclaimed. "We all want to

hear that; but let's have supper first. It's almost sunset now. We've been asleep ever since ten o'clock, Durkee."

"Supper with all my heart!" cried our visitor. "To tell the truth, I've had nothing save a cold lunch since six this morning."

We all fell to, and, in less than an hour, had a bountiful spread of steak, fried pickerel, fried (frozen) potatoes, corn-cake and butter, and mince-pie. Durkee—who was seemingly a man of about five and twenty—"showed us how to eat," as he expressed it; and I must say for him, that he knew all about it. After every thing had disappeared, the Doctor invited him round to see how the glass stood. Just how high it stood I did not inquire.

By this time it was dark. A great fire was got under way; and we all sat down in the doorway.

"Now for that story, Mr. Durkee," said Wash.

"Yes, give us that story," we all chimed in.

"Well, yes. Let me see: where was I? Oh! as I was saying, these lucivees never troubled us much till father began sheep-raising: then we had to look out for the young lambs pretty sharp. The time I spoke of getting so scared was the second spring we were there. We had one lamb quite early in the winter, and the girls had brought it up in the house; and, when the snow began to go off, it used to go out upon the bare spots, nibbling about.

"One noon, as we went in to dinner, I saw the lamb on a little knoll behind the house, not more than five rods away. Well, while we were at dinner, the lamb disappeared. We never saw it again, but could guess pretty



near what had become of it; and one of our neighbors afterwards told us that he saw a large animal crossing the fields about noon, but thought it was a dog.

"I knew that the animal, whatever it might be, after getting such a nice taste, would be likely to hang about for a while. We had a large bear-trap; and, going out into the bushes, I shot a rabbit for bait, and set it down in the old-growth woods with a clog.

"We didn't get him that night: but the next night, just as we were going to bed, we heard a terrible screeching down where the trap was; and I knew we had either got the old chap, or pinched him pretty hard.

"'Twas a moonlight night, and very light; full moon, I think. We found the trap gone, and started on the trail made by the trap in the moss and brush. My Brother Dave and I were ahead: father and old John Putnam, who happened to be at our house, were coming on behind. Boy-like, we were highly excited, and had a great deal more zeal than wisdom. After following for about half a mile, we came out into an open place, and were leaning forward on a dog-trot, one behind the other, when we were completely upset by the lucivee coming against us with a spit and a growl. Quick as thought, I was knocked flat, and went rolling over and over in the brush, with the cat top of me, grappling and growling, and the old bear-trap clanking. One pull of his long claws had stripped my stout, home-made jacket clean off me, except the arms; and if the dog had not sprung upon him, and taken his attention, he *would have done my job.*

"We scrambled back out of his reach pretty quick. He had one foot in the trap; and there he stood at bay, rattling the chain, and screeching at us. His big round eyes seemed to shoot out flashes, he was so mad. The usual color of their eyes is like bright silver; but, when mad, they flash strangely. In a few moments, father came up and shot him. It was the largest one I ever saw.

"I was pretty cautious about chasing a trap after that, you'd better believe.

"Another time, while I was trapping in the Moosehead region, I recollect coming out one night into an opening known as 'Dolman's Clearing.' The place had a bad name, and was generally shunned by hunters. A murder was said to have been committed there some years before; and there was the usual *bosh* about the old log-house being haunted. It *was* a dismal sort of a place. Commonly, I should have preferred camping out to spending the night there: but it had been raining several days; every bush was a shower-bath, and I was thoroughly soaked, — a fact which made any kind of a shelter, where a fire could be kindled, look inviting. The old house was in a very tumble-down condition. The door and windows, if there ever were any, were gone. But there was a loft, having a loose floor with a trap-door hole, where there had probably been a ladder some time. Well, I built a fire, cooked my supper, dried my clothes, and, being pretty well tired out, soon went to sleep. I don't know how long I had slept; but, some time along in the night, I found myself awake, with a terrific screech ringing in my ears, — such a pealer, that I was on my feet before I was fairly awake.

"My fire had gone down, and it was dark as Egypt. I confess I was a little scared. All the nonsense I'd heard about old Dolman's ghost popped into my mind; and there, in the night, I felt half inclined to *swallow* it. I hadn't seen a single human being for more than three weeks; and had got kinder lonesome, I suppose.

"All was still enough now. It had slacked up raining, and the fireflies were flitting about. I went out and listened. Every thing seemed quiet and regular; and, after poking and *harking* around a while, I began to think that perhaps I might have been *fooled* by a bad dream. So I lay down again, and by and by dozed off into a drowse, I think; for I thought I was being *charmed* by a black snake, and, starting, found myself staring up at the hole in the chamber-floor, where I saw two bright spots, about a hand's-breadth apart, that shone and glowed like coals of fire. It took me a moment to collect my wits; and then I knew it must be some animal of the cat kind. I put my hand out for my rifle; and, the moment I stirred, there came another yawl. The gun wasn't where I thought I had put it; and, knowing the creature would jump, I sprang up just as he leaped down through the hole.

"If I'd only got hold of the gun, I might have shot him: for he stood glaring at me a moment, with his back up, making a queer wheezing noise; then bounded through one of the window-holes, and disappeared. I knew it must be a lucivee by the peculiar screech. He was probably up in the loft when I came in, and had been watching me all night, until, getting uneasy or hungry, he began to scream."

Wash remarked that this was something such an adventure as we had had while at Mt. Katahdin two years ago. He then told Durkee and the Doctor of the scrimmage we had with "Beelly" in old "Cluey's" log-hut.

"I make no doubt of it," said Durkee, laughing heartily. "They are always getting into old deserted buildings. Your yarn makes me think of a scrape a party of us had with one years ago, when I lived at home.

"Uncle Ezra from New York had come on to visit us late one fall; and nothing would do but we must go on a moose-hunt. These city men are always in for a hunt of some sort. So five of us — Uncle Ez, my Brother Dave and myself, a lately-returned cavalry man, neighbor of ours, named Brown ('twas in 1866), and 'old Sanders,' a backwoodsman, who, in his younger days, had been a river-driver, but latterly a hunter and trapper — started off. We had two hounds, and about noon got on a moose-trail, which we followed till near sunset.

"But, during the afternoon, it had clouded up, and, toward night, came on to snow.

"'Going to be a regular north-easter!' said old Sanders. 'We may as well get out of this. 'Twill be colder than *Biter* by morning!'

"'U-ugh! no doubt,' exclaimed Uncle Ezra, shivering. 'But how far is it back to the settlement, for a guess?'

"'Oh! twenty miles, or thereabout,' replied Sanders, laughing grimly.

“‘Twenty miles to-night! Confound it!’ cried Uncle Ez, looking round to the rest of us, who were much of his opinion, as we stood there with the snow sifting down through the bare forest-branches, and rattling inclemently on the dried leaves.

“‘By George,’ cried Brown, ‘this is tougher than any thing I saw in the “service”! Twenty miles in such a storm!’

“‘No use grumbling; you would come, you know; may as well make the best of it,’ said Sanders. ‘But we’ve got a long tramp: so let’s be off.’

“We were, we judged, somewhere in the town of Grafton, on the head waters of Bear River, a tributary of the Androscoggin. The morning had promised a beautiful Indian-summer day; but winter had now burst down upon us with hail and snow, driven by the cutting north-east wind, which sighed and howled with November dreariness through the leaden-colored forest.

“The moose had fared much better than his hunters; for, after leading us off steadily into the wilderness, he had now left us to get back the best way we could in storm and darkness.

“For two or three hours we tramped on steadily, following down the river, and consoling ourselves as best we might with the reflection, that, provided we didn’t get lost, we should get down to some farmhouse by midnight, possibly. It was now past six o’clock, and getting quite dark, when we noticed that the forest lightened up ahead; and a few moments later we came out into a large opening on the stream, containing a big building of some sort.

“‘Hurrah!’ shouted Uncle Ezra: ‘there’s a house!’

“‘Not a house exactly,’ said Brown, straining his eyes to reconnoitre. ‘I should call that a barn.’

“‘Hay-farm here, I guess,’ said Sanders, ‘where they cut hay for the logging-camps. No house here.’

“‘No light, anyway,’ said Dave.

“‘Well, then,’ cried Uncle Ezra, striking out across the clearing, ‘in lack of a house, we’ll try the barn.’

“We all followed. Any sort of a shelter was a god-send on such a night; and we were soon stumbling round the corner of a great deserted structure of rough boards, looming up lonesomely amid the whirling snow, with one of its ‘great doors’ swinging and banging with dismal *slams*.

“We dodged in, however, and contrived to secure the reckless old door by standing a piece of timber slantingly against it on the outside. There was a large quantity of hay stored within. The scaffolds and mows were filled up to the ‘high beams;’ and there was also a lot lying loose on the floor.

“It wouldn’t do to kindle a fire in there; and nobody wanted one enough to build it out in the snow: so we divided the remainder of our ‘cold bite’ in the dark, and, after eating it, shook down a bed of the hay, and turned in side by side, with a beautiful coverlet of the same material. For a long time we lay talking and congratulating ourselves in our comfortable bunk; till, after a while, first Brown, then Uncle Ez, and, soon after, Sanders, began snoring drowsily. Dave took up the chorus; and I didn’t listen much longer.

“I don’t know how long we had been asleep, when all

at once I woke with a jump, and in considerable alarm. Something was snuffing and scratching through the hay down at my feet. I was sure I felt claws on my boot. It took me a moment to recollect where I was; and it then flashed into my mind that Uncle Ezra was playing off another of his jokes (he was always at it) to frighten me.

“The scratching and rustling continued, working up nearer; but I waited for a good chance. ‘I’ll fix you, old fellow!’ thought I, and lay motionless till I felt what I took to be his finger-nails pinching up my trousers-leg; then I kicked out at a venture, hoping to pay him for his untimely antics.

“My foot hit something — pretty hard! There was a spit, a growl, and a flash of two fiery eyes in the blackness. In my fright and surprise I executed a rolling leap over Brown (who lay next to me), and landed plump on Uncle Ez. He jumped up, pitching me down into the hay at his feet. As yet, none had spoken; but the following inquiries instantly broke out in the dark:—

“‘Halloo!’ from uncle.

“‘What’s up?’ from Brown.

“‘Wildcats, wildcats!’ screamed I, sprawling in the hay.

“‘Halloo!’ from old Sanders, waking up.

“‘What’s the matter?’ from Dave.

“‘Catamounts, wildcats!’ I vociferated.

“There was an instant scrabble. Everybody was on his feet in no time. Gusts of hay flew about.

“Knowing the creature was on my side, I leaped over toward the other, ran against Brown, was taken for the

wildcat, and got a knock which sent me sprawling in the hay again.

“‘Here he is!’ yelled Brown, — ‘here he is! Out with your knives!’

“‘Hold on! Don’t stab!’ I shouted. ‘You are wrong! — all wrong!’

“‘Strike a light, strike a light!’ cried Sanders, with ‘Open the door, open the door!’ from Uncle Ez.

“Everybody ran toward the door to push it open, — all together; and actually ran square on to the *cat*, which had also started for the door. A tornado of spits and snarls arose: the creature bit and dug away right and left, slitting open pant-legs, snapping its teeth, and tripping up nearly the whole party in its struggle among our legs. The hounds rushed in to complete the uproar; while voices not identified cried all at once, —

“‘Git out!’

“‘Ste-boy!’

“‘Git out!’

“‘Don’t strike here!’

“‘Who you kicking?’

“‘Avast that knife!’ from Sanders.

“‘For God’s sake, keep that gun off my head!’ from Brown.

“All this, with an instantaneous rush for the other end of the floor: in fact, another blind and unintentional run on the already-maddened animal, which had gone there just ahead of us. This time the creature sprang at Uncle Ezra full tilt, knocking him against somebody else. Another outrageous panic followed. Everybody kicked and struggled at random; and amid shouts,



barks, growls, and spits, the beast got through the crowd somehow, and escaped up the side of the mow.

“‘Order, order!’ roared Sanders above the outcry. ‘Now just stand still, — stand still everybody, — till we get a light.’

“Matches were fumbled out and struck; but they only seemed to make the darkness denser; till Sanders found some pine-splinters on the floor, which he lighted. Putting one of these into the muzzle of his rifle, he thrust it upward, disclosing an animal larger than the hounds, crouching on the high beam.

“‘There he is!’ cried Dave.

“‘Take your gun, Brown!’ said Sanders. ‘But no: you hold the torch, and let me shoot!’

“Brown took the torch; and Sanders, taking up a gun, fired. The *cat* yawled, and, bounding off sideways from the beam, came sailing down toward us with its claws spread out. Brown jumped aside to get out of the way. The splint fell out of the gun on the floor, putting it out; and down came the wounded beast, snapping and snarling in the midst of us.

“Darkness reigned; and such a scrimmage as followed there on the narrow floor! I remember jumping frenziedly backward upon some one, who pitched me head-long again, with my face flat on the creature’s horrible fur! But it didn’t move, and, I have no doubt, was already dead.

“Meanwhile somebody had struck out at random, and laid Uncle Ezra flat for a moment; and somebody else had hit a dog, which was lamenting piteously. But order was at last restored, and another splinter lighted;

when the creature was found to be stone-dead in the hay.

"It was a large specimen of what Sanders called a 'bob-cat;' which is nothing more nor less than the Canada lynx.

"It was probably in the barn when we went in; having gone in, like ourselves, to get shelter from the storm. Our noisy entrance had doubtless given it quite a surprise; and, being of an inquisitive mind, it had come down, after all was quiet, to investigate, with the results before mentioned.

"The fur was of a beautiful stone-gray color, fading into white upon the under parts of the body. The skin was unanimously voted to Uncle Ez, as he had suffered most, to keep as a memento of our night in the old barn on Bear River."

"Mr. Durkee," said the Doctor, "that's the worst cat-story I ever heard — up to this date. Let's go round and see how the mercury stands."

When they had come back (which they did in about five minutes), Wade called for another story.

"Certainly," said our genial friend. "One doesn't live all his life in a *wooden* country like this without meeting with plenty of cat-adventures; and I assure you, gentlemen, that every one of these *tales* stands for an actual occurrence."

"Certainly, certainly!" Of course, we never doubted that.

"Well, then," continued Durkee, "the following incident happened two years ago this winter. I was then at a logging-camp on the 'Dead Diamond Stream.'

We had a jolly rough crew of nearly thirty. The camp was a large log-shanty, thirty foot square, with a log-porch in front, which was used, in part, as a store-room for the pork and flour. Through this porch we all had to pass out and in to the camp. It had a rough slab-door, hung with leather hinges; as was also the camp-door. The porch was supposed to keep the camp warmer than it would otherwise have been.

“One night, three or four of us had been out till eight or nine o'clock, looking to some marten-traps we had set on a neighboring mountain. As we came up to the porch, I noticed the door was ajar. This was nothing unusual, however. We stepped in. The inside camp-door was shut: all was dark in the porch. As we came stamping in to go through, we heard a great scratching and scrambling over the barrels. Thought at first it was the cook out there after something, and sang out to him. At that, somebody opened the inside door; when a big lucivee sprang down from the barrels, and dived into the camp to get out of our way. You can guess what an uproar that made inside: twenty men shut up in there with a ‘bob-cat,’ as they called it. They had one tallow-candle burning: somebody upset that, first thing. ’Twas dark as poker; everybody shouting and kicking and striking; the cat wauling and jumping about. They had a great stove, red-hot; for it was a sharp night. The creature got on to that, making a horrible stench of burnt hair. There! I never heard such a noise. Several of the men got scratched; and more than a dozen got whacks from each other—meant for the lucivee. At last the cook gave it a lick with his axe, which knocked it over.

“We kept the skin hung up in the porch all the rest of the winter, and had many a laugh over it.

“I’ve had a good many scrapes with cats, first and last; but that was about the most outrageous one.”

## SIXTH DAY.

Visiting Traps. — Re-clogging. — Bait gone. — A Lynx Hard and Fast. — “Blessed are the Merciful.” — How to kill a *Cat* without hurting it. — Prof. Tyndall’s Rifle-ball Theory. — We resolve to kill our Cats scientifically. — A Lucivee’s Foot left in a Trap. — Down the Lake on an Otter-Hunt. — Wash projects a Novel Method of Hunting the Animal, and catches a Ducking. — An Anecdote of the Otter.

OUR visitor, Durkee, was stirring surprisingly early next morning: he was in haste to go on, I presume. When I waked, he had a blithe fire going. Considerably to my astonishment, too, the Doctor was up. Whether they had yet made an observation of the thermometer, I really cannot say; but it looked like it, I thought.

We had breakfast off by sunrise; and Durkee immediately departed with a hearty “good-luck” all round. We watched him tramping away across the lake, and saw him disappear among the alders on the opposite shore.

“There he goes — for a jolly *confrère*,” muttered the Doctor. “Who would have thought of *his* turning up here in the wilderness?”

"Well, we ought to be looking to our traps," Wash reminded. "They got scanty care from us yesterday."

Not to be caught on another dilemma like that of the previous day, we packed a travelling-bag with mince-pie; and, in lieu of the rifle, Wash took the axe, as likely to be a more serviceable utensil. Raed, moreover, carried the coffee-pot slung to his back after the manner of a knapsack, with coffee enough for three "charges" in his pocket.

Directly after starting out from camp, we had the good fortune to shoot a hare, which we espied "budding" from a bush. Its small carcass came into immediate requisition; for, on coming out to the place where lay our first two traps, we found them both robbed of bait. The traps themselves were unmolested. Not a feather with which we had covered them seemed to have been stirred. Shrewd caution had been used. I was inclined to think it might have been a fox. Re-baiting, we chained to each another clog of about the same weight, and went on to the next, — the one we had covered with trailing moss scented with assafoetida. Bait, trap, and all were gone.

"Another twelve miles' chase!" groaned Wade. "Well we took the mince-pie!"

But, as it happened, we had not far to look. Before we had gone a hundred yards along the trail, we heard the chain rattle, and saw the creature leaping and threshing about amid a clump of little basswoods.

"The clog has caught!" shouted Wash.

It was a lynx. As we came up, it burst out *yawling* hideously, and bounded to and fro in the most frantic

manner. But the clog, which was caught at both ends against the bass-trunks, held fast. Finding escape hopeless, it turned, crouched, and growled menacingly. Its ears lay back; its eyes flashed and glowed. A very picture of fury it seemed.

"Hold on!" said Raed. "Let's not get too near. He means business. If he should jump this way, the clog might not hold."

It had one hind-foot in the trap. We prudently halted at a distance of twenty yards; then gradually moved up to within a couple of rods. The creature eyed us *scratchingly*, and kept up a continuous miauwling, — something like a house-cat when cornered up in a room and frightened.

"I wish we had the rifle!" said Raed. "If we fire at it with shot, it will be sure to spring. Besides, the shot will cut up the fur."

"Too bad to mangle the poor brute!" Wade remarked.

Pity, I fear, had come into none of our hearts but his. Our only thought had been to despatch it somehow or anyhow.

"Wade," said the Doctor approvingly, "'blessed are the merciful.' You ought at once to be made a life-member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to our Dumb Animals."

Wade blushingly disclaimed any extra soft-heartedness on his part. The Doctor's *chaff* rather demoralized him. "But," said he, rallying a little, "I don't see any good in torturing the poor creatures. It's bad enough to come up here and kill them, — for sport, — without mangling and *excruciating* them needlessly."

"Shows his good, kind heart!" cried the Doctor, rubbing his hands.

"Of course he does!" said Wash, who, for some reason, is less afraid of the Doctor's raillery than any of the other boys. "It's quite an item to have a kind heart to show, I think."

"Something of a problem to kill the beast without hurting him any," laughed Raed.

"Why, didn't ever you read that essay by Tyndall, on 'Death by Lightning'?" exclaimed Wade. "The professor claims, that, in case of death by lightning-stroke, there is no suffering, no pain; the point assumed being, that the rapidity of the shock destroys the power of sensation before the sensory nerves have time to translate the sense of injury."

"But we should find it rather difficult to get up a thunder-storm every time we want to kill a *cat*" objected the Doctor.

"Yes; but the professor claims, also, that a rifle-ball through the brain has much the same effect," continued Wade. "The passage of the bullet, he assures us, is much more rapid than *nerve* motion. In illustration of the position that death by lightning is painless, he cites his own experience on an evening when he accidentally received a shock from a battery. For a moment he knew nothing, *sensed* nothing; and he was convinced, that, had the shock been heavy enough to kill him, he would never have *felt* it."

"Then, according to Tyndall's rifle-ball theory, a military execution might be quite painless," remarked Wash, "provided the firing-party aimed at the head."



It seemed so, if we understood the professor's argument.

"Then, in the name of God and humanity, why not in that way execute all criminals condemned to death," exclaimed Raed, "instead of our barbarous, revengeful, and revolting mode of hanging by the neck, leaving the victim to struggle and writhe twenty minutes, as is often the case? Twenty minutes! which, to a poor wretch thus tortured, must seem twenty hours, — ay, twenty ages!"

"Take care, take care!" cried the Doctor. "Don't amplify so. You'll make the cat jump."

"Well, I move, that, hereafter, we kill our cats *scientifically*," said I.

"Which means humanely," amended Raed.

"But who's philanthropist enough to go back to camp after the rifle?" Wash demanded.

But I had a few bullets with me, and thought we might compromise the matter by drawing the load from one of the barrels of the shot-gun, and substituting a ball. This was done.

"Now, who's going to undertake this *office of love*?" inquired the Doctor.

It rather seemed to devolve upon Wade. I handed him the gun. He took a step forward, and cocked it.

"Get good aim now," advised Wash; "else it will hardly be an act of mercy for *him* — or the rest of us."

Wade fired; and the animal tumbled over with scarcely a kick. 'Twas a beautiful shot, very happily illustrating both young Additon's marksmanship and the professor's theory.

This was our third cat. We skinned it, reset the trap, and went on to the other two set among the fox-bones. We found them both sprung as before. Curiously enough, one of them had a hare in it, — caught round the neck, and fairly choked to death. The poor little fellow could hardly have been attracted by the *bait*. The other trap had been dragged to a little distance, and lay much as we had found it two mornings previously, — with a *foot* in it; only this time, instead of a black foot, it was a gray foot, — a lucivee's foot! This time it was a lynx that had got into the trap; and *something* had, in turn, eaten it up. Its bones lay scattered about, with wet bits and wads of its fine long fur chewed up and spit out.

We stood looking over the scene of the *massacre*.

"What think now?" demanded Wash meaningly.

Nobody knew exactly what to think.

"Is it to be supposed that these 'bob-cats' are cannibals?" persisted Wash. "If one of their number gets into a trap, is it likely that the rest will fall to and eat him up?"

"Why not?" said Raed. "Wolves often do so."

"It's not a supposable case!" exclaimed Wash with some heat. "This is a panther's work!"

Something had, clearly, devoured the lynx; but I, for one, was hardly prepared to believe it the "work" of a catamount. Not often, within the last five years, has the *Felis concolor* been met with in Maine. But very few of our oldest hunters have ever seen it. Indeed, I know of but three authentic accounts of adventure with this beast occurring within this State. Of these a brief sketch will presently follow.

We set the two traps again, using for bait the assafoetidaed carcass of the unfortunate little hare.

The trap in the trail leading up to the mountain was as we had left it. We took it up, and went back to camp and to dinner.

In the afternoon we took our two traps (the one we had brought back from our long tramp, and the one we had just taken up), and went down the pond, past the "hole" where we had fished, and came round to the hummock and the old pine-stump where we had seen the singular black animal watching us. The sharp cold of the previous evening had closed up nearly the whole of the open stretch along the bog. That it should remain open a day even, at this season, was a curiosity.

Going along the shore of the hummock, we saw that the bank shelved off abruptly into tolerably deep water; and in one place it was worn smooth, and was icy, as if some animal had been sliding from it down into the pond. Otherwise there were no traces. But, seeing this, I at once took the hint.

We then climbed up to the stump where we had seen the creature sitting. All about it, the snow was trodden hard. The heart of the stump had rotted away, leaving a dark hole down into the ground. Wade and I were a little ahead; and, looking into it, we espied a broad black muzzle, and a pair of wicked little eyes gleaming up at us.

"Halloo!" cried Wade: "here he is!" thrusting in the barrel of the rifle. The head vanished.

"What was it? What did it look like, anyway?" exclaimed Wade.

"Had mouse-ears, little sparkling eyes, and a mighty blunt nose," Wade explained.

Even the sagacious Doctor looked puzzled.

But I thought it was an otter, judging from the "slide" on the bank, and the momentary glimpse I had got of its head. It was just about such a place, too, as the otter would naturally select for its winter-quarters, — a place where there was open water, and plenty of fish.\*

"Otters! — what about them?" inquired the Doctor. "Will they fight much?"

"Fight when cornered; so I read," Wash explained. "Dogs are no match for them. But their fur is valuable."

"That so?" demanded Raed. "We must get this one, then, if we can. What are they worth apiece? — their skins, I mean?"

Wash had heard that a good otter-skin was worth from twelve to fifteen dollars.

"Must get him by all means!" exclaimed the Doctor. "Why, that's equal to a first-class *fee*!"

I suggested that there might, perhaps, be more than one. Two, three, and even four otters are sometimes found together in these winter burrows.

"But I see no track from the stump here down to the water," Wash remarked. "That's strange! Not a sign of a trail! Of course they are in connection with the water: else how do they live?"

I suggested that there might possibly be a passage under ground; but, as the distance from the stump to the water was all of four rods, Raed thought this hardly

\* See Field Notes.

probable. Yet, under these old pine-stumps, curiously roomy cavities will sometimes be found. We went down to reconnoitre the bank. It fell off steeply into six or seven feet of water; and, a little to one side of the "slide," there was the appearance of an opening three or four feet under water.

Wade was standing up near the stump.

"Stamp on the ground," Raed called out to him, "or beat down with the axe!"

Wade beat on the stump violently. We stood looking over into the water, and, a moment later, saw a long, slim animal glide out from under the bank, and dart off beneath the ice; then another.

"Two of them!" Wash shouted.

"Watch and see where they come up," admonished Raed. "Have the rifle ready."

We continued intently observant for nearly five minutes; but they did not come up in the open water. We presumed there might be air-holes in the ice.

"Well, shall we set the traps for 'em?" quoth the Doctor.

"I suppose so," said Raed; "but we rather ought to bag at least one of them to-day — now."

"Might watch here at the stump, and shoot when one shows his head," Wade suggested.

"But, even if you hit the animal, he would draw back into the hole, out of reach," objected the more practical Wash.

"Well, then, stand on the bank, and shoot when they pass out," said Wade.

"Be pretty sure to get off, even then, into deep

water under the ice," Wash observed; "and then I doubt whether the bullet would take effect through three feet of water. No, fellows: I've got the better plan."

"Let's hear it!" cried the Doctor.

"Well, then, I propose to cut a crotched pole about a dozen feet long, with prongs some foot or eighteen inches in length, after the fashion of a pitchfork, having the prongs sharpened. With this in hand, I'll stand on the bank here, holding it ready to prod. Then, when one of them *scoots* out, I'll pin him, and hold him fast."

"If you can," supplemented Raed, laughing.

"Oh, I can hold him fast enough!" exclaimed Wash. "Once I get those prongs over his back, I can bear down hard enough to hold him, I'll warrant ye!"

It seemed a rather good idea, — a very original one certainly.

A yellow-birch sapling of the *crotched* sort was cut, trimmed up, and the prongs sharpened off to Wash's liking.

But the others were still out in the lake. It was not probable, however, that they would relish staying out there in the icy water any longer than they were obliged to. So, in order to give them opportunity to get back into their burrow, we went off, and around upon the ice again. Raed and the Doctor sought to frighten them back by shouting, and stamping on the snow. Wade even went so far as to clear out the hole where we had fished a few days previous, and splash and shout in it.

"Guess they've gone in, if they are going," remarked Wash after we had been beating about on the ice for fifteen or twenty minutes.

We went ashore, and came cautiously along the bank. Wash took his forked pole, and placed himself in a position to *jab* with it. Wade had gone directly up to the stump.

"Ha! here they are!" he muttered. "Got another glimpse!"

"Are you all ready, Wash?" demanded Raed.

"All ready!" responded the expectant sportsman.

We beat on the stump, and stamped the snow with our rackets. A faint *rumble* sounded from beneath. Wash *jabbed*. He had to *lean off* on the bank pretty well, and threw his whole weight upon the pole. There was an instant's struggle and spattering, when Wash disappeared over the bank. I caught a glimpse of his *racketed* heels. Then came a splash and a suppressed shout. We ran down. He was fighting the water with both hands; but his feet didn't seem to be of much service to him. "Catch hold hands!" exclaimed Raed, planting his feet firmly on the bank. Wade and the Doctor strung out behind him with a firm hand-grip; and, slipping my feet out of the racket-straps, I swung down the bank, and, reaching out, managed to grab hold of the tail of one of Wash's snow-shoes. He was in this way drawn ashore, and pulled up the bank, puffing and blowing in a lively manner, wet to the skin in ice-water, with the thermometer at seven degrees above only! No joke for him; though we could but grin, once he was safely out.

"Couldn't ye hold him, Wash?" demanded Wade, with a wink to the rest of us.

"Wiggled prodigiously, didn't he?" suggested Raed.

But Wash's teeth had begun to chatter alarmingly.

"Must be got to a fire and into dry *togs* immediately," pronounced the Doctor. "Come, sir, you must run back to camp with me. We'll try a race." Wade pulled off his overcoat, and wrapped it about the shiverer. Raed and I attended to his rackets.

But, despite his ducking, Wash's thoughts were still on the game.

"*Fel-fe-fe-fel-ows*," he chattered, "o-o-o-o-nly-one-of e-e-e-em-ca-ca-ca-cameout. The-oth-oth-other-t-t-t-two-reinthereyet."

"Two more!" said I.

"Ye-ye-yes, a-coup-coup-couple mo-more. Setout-to-comeout, b-b-butdartedback. C-c-c-catch'em!"

"Well, well, come along with you!" cried the Doctor, marching him off authoritatively.

"Three of them, then," said Wade. "Is it best for us to try Wash's crotched pole?" Raed declared that he had seen all of it that he cared to see. But I still had faith in it; and Wade thought he should like to have a hand in it: so we two agreed to hold the pole while Raed beat on the stump. But first we took the precaution to take off our rackets. Then, getting the prongs poised astride the hole, Wade gave the signal. Raed beat and *shooed savagely*. In a moment, there came a wavy motion of the water deep down; and an otter came swimming swiftly out beneath the prongs. I jabbed. We both threw our weight on it. We had pinned him right back of the shoulders. The animal struggled violently. I could easily imagine how Wash had been upset. But our united weight proved too much



for its strength. It couldn't wriggle out; though it squirmed and doubled frantically for fully five minutes, till it fairly drowned: for an otter must breathe, as well as any other quadruped; though it will remain under water somewhat over a minute; some hunters say three minutes. Not until it had long ceased to twist did we venture to take up the pole. It then lay still on the bottom. Indeed, the carcass of an otter always sinks. We fished it out.

In the struggle the other had escaped past us, and dived off into the deep, dark water under the ice. But, hoping to secure one or both of them, we set the two traps, — one in the old stump, chaining it fast; and the other in the water, at the mouth of the burrow leading out into the lake. The latter we made fast by the ring of the chain over a stake driven with considerable difficulty into the loose, frozen soil of the bank.

This done, we started for camp, carrying the otter. It gave us a load. When we started, Wade had set its weight at forty-five pounds; but, before we got in with it, he was confident it wouldn't fall an ounce short of *seventy*.

We found Wash inside of his spare shirt, with his legs wrapped up in blankets. The Doctor was dosing him with hot, strong black tea, in lack of other restoratives. His coat, pants, &c., were steaming before the fire. When he saw us bringing in the otter, he seemed hardly to know whether to exult in the final success of his project, or feel chagrined at his own failure to execute it. His dubious countenance set us all a-laughing afresh. The affair got hold of my own risibilities all

the more from the fact that I now never look at an otter, not even the picture of one, without thinking of the luckless way in which, in company with several other little fellows, I made my first acquaintance with one of these animals one sunny sabbath morning in boyhood. Once well a-laughing, it is not so easy hushing up. Wash waxed so indignant under the prolonged cachinnation, that, to appease him, I at length had to explain; and so told the story to the party while we were getting supper.

“’Twas years ago. Three of us little shavers were on our way to church, or ‘goin’ to meetin’,’ as we called it. The meeting-house was not within ‘a stone’s-throw,’ by any means: it was nearly five miles distant from our little neighborhood.

“The parish, or rather ‘circuit’ (in Methodist phrase), had a vast territorial area; something like a hundred square miles, I believe. We considered ourselves comparatively near the church: still it was quite a walk for boys of nine and ten. But we couldn’t all ride; and, as grandfather made it a point to have the whole family go to meeting, we little fellows were fixed up and sent on ahead, under strict orders not to play, — first, because it would be wicked; second, because we should soil our clothes. Usually this command was pretty well obeyed.

“On the morning in question we were going along with the very best intentions, no doubt, and had accomplished nearly three miles, when, just as we were crossing the log-bridge over the ‘sawmill brook,’ little Billy Murch saw some kind of an animal whisk under a pile of boards near the road.

“ ‘Oh, see that woodchuck !’

“ ‘Where ? where ?’

“ ‘Gone under them boards !’

“ ‘We can git ’im ! we can git ’im !’ cried Tom Edwards.

“You see how it was. The excitement of seeing the animal had taken us off our guard. The temptation was too sudden for us. We ran to the board-pile ; and that was the last thought of Sunday we had for the time.

“ ‘Git a pole !’ cried Tom.

“I ran to bring a dead alder-stick lying in the ditch.

“ ‘That’s it ! There, you stand on this side !’ exclaimed Tom. ‘Take stones ! I’ll punch ’im out : you knock ’im !’

“Woodchucks are always deemed fair game in farming neighborhoods. Boys and dogs assail them at sight. True to our traditions, we intended to give no quarter.

“Tom prodded with the pole. Billy and I stood ready to strike the poor little creature’s head as soon as he should show it. But we had more than we bargained for this time. Tom couldn’t seem to drive him out.

“ ‘Keeps bitin’ at the pole ; ’most pulls it out o’ my hands,’ said he. ‘It’s an awful big one ! See’f ye can see ’im.’

“Billy and I peeped under on our side. It was rather dark beneath the pile, on account of the grass and weeds growing on both sides ; but I could see a yellowish, hairy back, not far under. So, dropping into a sitting position on one leg, I began to kick at it.

“For the first kick or two, my foot struck, unresisted,

into soft-feeling fur: but, at the third kick, there was a sudden movement, a growling sound; and, with a smart snap, my toe was pinned.

"I tried to jump back, and struggled to pull out my leg. The creature held me fast. I could hear and *feel* its teeth gritting through the toe of my shoe. Scared at this, I roared out lustily, —

"‘Oh, oh, oh! he’s got me! Pull me out! pull me out!’

"Tom rushed at me. Billy and he lay hold of my arms, and tugged to drag me away. The animal held on. How I should have fared I really don’t know, had not my shoe-string given way. My foot came out; and we all three sprawled backwards, leaving the shoe in the creature’s mouth, under the boards.

"My Sunday shoe!

"‘Oh, dear!’ I cried, frightened at the sight of my bare stocking: ‘it’s Sunday!’

"Tom and Billy looked on in sympathetic distress; and just then, to add to our discomfiture, the wagons came rattling down the hill above the brook.

"‘Oh!’ exclaimed Billy. ‘What’ll they say?’

"‘Yes!’ cried Tom: ‘what *will* they say?’

"In a sudden panic,—not an unaccountable one, either,—we slunk down behind the board-pile; and in a moment the wagons went tearing by, and rumbled over the log-bridge. We lay still till they were out of sight among the alders.

"‘We must git it away from ’im,’ said Tom. ‘Git stakes out o’ the fence there. We’ll *podge* ’im.’

"We got stakes, and began to poke the supposed wood-

chuck on both sides with great energy. He retaliated in kind by snapping and champing the ends of our sticks, making a harsh, snuffling, and growling sound.

"Twenty-five or thirty minutes of this sort of work put us into rather bad plight for church. We kept at it, however. There was no other way but to worry him to death, and so get the shoe.

"Suddenly a voice exclaimed, —

"‘There they are now!’

"We looked hastily up.

"‘There were Mr. Edwards and grandfather crossing the bridge. Not finding us at the church, they had come back to search for us.

"In a country still, for the most part, covered with forest, and infested with bears and lynxes, our non-appearance demanded immediate search.

"‘Thomas,’ said Mr. Edwards, ‘what are you doing there?’

"‘There’s a woodchuck under here,’ explained the recusant Thomas; ‘an’ he’s got Kit’s shoe.’

"At the word ‘woodchuck,’ grandfather began to break an alder-stick. I stood and watched him break off the twigs, knowing very well what was coming. And it came!

"The old gentleman took me by the shoulder, and gave me three cuts. They didn’t hurt my skin much; but they hurt my feelings dreadfully.

"Tom, meanwhile, was getting his dose of correction in the form of an old-fashioned spanking. Billy, being of a different brood, escaped.

"‘Now step yourselves to meeting,’ said Mr. Edwards.

"Grandfather essayed to walk me along by the shoulder; but, with only one shoe, my limp was at once apparent.

" 'Where's your other shoe, sir?'

" 'It's — it's — it's under the boards. The wood — woodchuck's got it.'

"Grandfather went back, and looked under.

" 'See here, Edwards!' he called.

"Mr. Edwards went back, and looked. Then they laughed.

" 'I should say *woodchuck!*' exclaimed Edwards, picking up one of our stakes. Grandfather lifted up the boards. Instantly a large, yellow-brown animal bobbed out, but was struck down by the stake.

"They examined it a moment; then threw the carcass upon the pile of boards. Grandfather now drew out my shoe. But, alas! it was so slit and chewed up, it wouldn't stay on my foot.

" 'Carry it in your hand,' said grandfather. 'Take off your stocking too. There, come along now. Next time, you let *such* woodchucks alone.'

"We were marched on to church. Services had commenced before we got there. Nobody knows what I suffered going in with one shoe, and my hair so tumbled up. Everybody would look. Oh, what a disgraced little chap I felt myself!

"That was a day long to be winced at.

"All the little girls made it a point to come along at noon, and peep over the pew-door at my bare foot. The story had somehow got out.

" 'That's the little woodchuck-boy,' they kept saying.

“ ‘ Did he bite yer toe, bubby ? ’

“ Ah, well ! it came to an end at last. In view of my shoeless condition, I was allowed to ride home, sitting in the back of the wagon, where my bare foot still further contrasted with my shod one.

“ At the board-pile grandfather stopped, and put the *otter* into the wagon with me behind : so I rode home with my late enemy.”

## SEVENTH DAY (SUNDAY).

"No Cat-Hunting on the Lord's Day." — A Bible wanted. — Some Appropriate Advice from the Doctor ; also his Opinion of Dickens and Charles Reade. — "Foul Play." — A Fisher and Hare. — Anecdote of a Fisher and Heron. — Another Otter. — The Otter and the Woodchucks. — Some Strange Noises from the Lake.

**D**URING the night, the weather moderated. In the morning, the woods across the lake had that dull, wet look peculiar to March or the latter part of February. Said Wash, "We're going to have a 'Ginerwery thaw,' I guess."

We were late up. It was Sunday, according to a rather dreamy calculation I made while but yet half awake. Presently the Doctor crawled out, yawned, and confirmed my suspicion. "Boys," said he, "to-day's Sunday. No cat-hunting on the Lord's Day. Has anybody got a Bible? Got a Bible, Mr. Raedway?"

"By golly, Doctor, you've got me this time!"

"Humph!" with severity written in every wrinkle of his visage. "Got a Bible, Mr. Burleigh?"

"I'm sorry, Doctor" —

"The deuse you are! You're but a *sorry* dog, to



make the best of you. No Bible!" (with derisive emphasis.) "Got a Bible, Mr. Additon?"

"Really, Doctor, I regret to say that" —

The Doctor wouldn't hear another word from him, but, turning abruptly, exclaimed, "Well, have *you* got a Bible, Christopher?"

It was something worse than humiliating to own up that I hadn't even a New Testament.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" the Doctor groaned. "What the (unmentionable) were you all thinking of! Up here in the very heart of the wilderness, and no Bible! What if an accident should happen, — a fatal accident! What if one of these *cats* should get a grab at some of your reckless young throats! How would you manage it? Then, I guess, you'd wish you had a Bible! Why, I'm astonished!"

"But, Doctor," remonstrated Raed, "why didn't you bring one yourself?"

"For the very reason you all vaguely hint at when you address me, — in a word, my unfortunate profession," explained our grim reprover. "It don't do for a doctor to sport a Bible. Physic and Scripture don't go well together. Somehow or other, the public want the line between medicine and theology clearly drawn. Folks won't have 'em mixed. They hire a doctor to tinker their bodies; but they won't hear to having their souls tinkered by the same man. If it got out that a doctor had taken to praying and Scripture-reading, he'd lose his practice forthwith. You nor I, nor anybody else, ever relished hearing a doctor pray. The professions have to be kept well separated. What good would it do

for a lawyer to pray in public? Everybody would snicker. That's a misfortune all doctors and lawyers share together. But to you young gentlemen, who are not committed to any profession, allow me to give a word of advice. *Always show respect for the Bible and for the sabbath.* Feel as much of it as you can; the more the better, of course: but be sure to *show* it. Always pat the Bible on the back when you're out in good society. Pet it; fondle it. Oh! you needn't laugh. It'll pay, I assure you. This generation of people, take 'em together, are still pretty *sweet* on the good old book of books; and such of them as have begun to be a little '*shaky*' feel sort of conscience-smitten about it, and can't help respecting a fellow who stands up for the Bible. So, if you want the public to think well of you, and trust you, and put you ahead, tend out to church Sundays, dressed plainly, but neatly; and no matter if folks get in the way of seeing you with a well-bound copy of the Scriptures in your hands."

All this the Doctor enforced with occasional sagacious nods. "There, boys," he concluded, "I've given you some sound advice. Try it, and see for yourselves. Then, changing the subject: "Rather warmer this morning, isn't it? Wonder how the glass stands?" and he slipped out to see.

"Oh, what a crocodile the Doctor is!" muttered Raed.

After breakfast, we set a good fire going, and sat down to read. Wash had brought up "David Copperfield," "Dombey and Son," and "Oliver Twist." Raed had Darwin's "Descent of Man" and Tyndall's "Frag-

ments of Science." The Doctor was vainly sighing for "The Morning Journal." Wash offered him "Copperfield;" but he shook his head gloomily.

"Never much fancied Dickens," said he incidentally. "Don't much affect low English character myself. Dickens may have been good at that; dare say he was: but I can't get interested in it; not very much. His plots and situations don't stir a man's blood much. His characters perform no grand *coups d'état*. They're a homely, grovelling set, and go plodding along, plodding along, always about so-so."

After listening to so decided an opinion of the "great novelist," we naturally felt some curiosity to know who were the Doctor's favorite authors. Said Wash, "What think of Charles Reade?"

The Doctor laughed knowingly. "Ah, well! Reade — he's a sardonic sort of a fellow; always trying to give the human race a dig in the ribs. Shouldn't wonder if somebody had dug him in the ribs pretty hard some time, — so hard, that he can't seem to forget it readily. But he plots better: I rather like his plots. And as for his characters, they've more *grit* and *vim* to 'em than Dickens's, — a great deal more. There's more action. On the whole, I rather like Reade's stories, particularly his court-trial scenes. But I must say he *is* rather given to epileptic-fits. His 'heroes' do drop down in a fit with most alarming frequency. Constitutional with 'em, fairly. But give me Reade for all of Dickens, barring fits."

Wade produced a copy of "Foul Play."

"Here, Doctor," said he: "this'll suit you, I guess. Only *one fit* in this, I believe."

"Thank you, thank you!" replied the Doctor. "Never happened to read 'Foul Play.' Guess I'll try it on. About a six-hours' job, isn't it? So here goes," — settling his back against one of the upright stakes which answered for a doorpost to our camp.

Conversation died out. The forenoon was sacred to Dickens — and Reade. Chickadees, with their plaintive little minor notes, flitted about. A couple of red-headed woodpeckers came and tapped noisily on one of the tall stubs; then departed with fitful wafts of wing. The wild solitude of the wilderness stole upon our silence. Ah, how profoundly alone is he who buries himself in these winter forests! Alone, and yet not alone; for the wild tribes come and go about him, and give, in place of the thickly-woven human influences, a strangely reproachful companionship.

Glancing up at length from "Dombey," I saw Raed shading his eyes, and looking off over the lake. Down near one of the islands, a black object, seemingly but a mere speck, was moving along on the snow. In the course of five minutes it had described a complete circle of perhaps fifty rods diameter; and it still continued going perseveringly on, apparently upon its own trail. We watched it in silence a few moments; then resumed our reading. But, presently looking again, I saw the animal still pursuing its circuitous path with a sort of tireless patience that showed itself even at this distance.

"What can the creature be about there?" Raed observed in a low voice. "Any idea what it is?"

Going into the camp, I took from my overcoat-pocket

a small spy-glass which we had brought with us, and, coming out, took a look through it. The distance was rather over half a mile; but the eye, thus aided, detected what would otherwise have passed wholly unnoticed, — a hare, about a hundred feet in advance of the black creature, leaping wearily, and stopping at frequent intervals. Its fitful motions indicated that it was nearly exhausted. Not so with its pursuer, which, under the glass, took the form of a rather long-bodied, slim animal, with a large, long tail, but short legs. We could see with what unflagging pace it kept up its pursuit. Gradually they both worked out from the island, beating up the lake.

"It's one of those otters, isn't it?" remarked Raed after a long look. "Just about the size; and the tail seems similar in shape. The legs, too, are like."

But, before I could have given an opinion, Wash, who had put down "Copperfield" for a look, pronounced against this supposition.

"Otters never take that pace," said he. "They go at a *lope*, doubling up their backs with every jump: at least, that's what the books say. That chap plods on like a pacer. And then I never heard of an otter's chasing its prey in that manner. Kit, isn't that a fisher?"

It was a fisher unquestionably. I had supposed so on first sighting the hare; for the fisher preys principally on the hare, which, unless surprised, it can only capture after a long chase.\*

For more than an hour we saw them going on, till

\* See Field Notes.

they had come off nearly opposite our camp. The hare was now but a few yards in advance of its grim foe; and at length the fisher pounced upon it. The struggle was but a momentary one. Very deliberately then the victor proceeded to regale himself. The long chase had doubtless given him a good appetite. After making what seemed a hearty meal, the creature began dragging and carrying off the remainder of the carcass toward the farther shore of the lake. We watched its motions with the glass.

“Going off to its burrow,” suggested Wash.

But that was not its purpose; for, on coming within a few rods of the alders, it dug a hole in the snow, and carefully buried the body; then, after sniffing around a while to see that every thing was all right, it went off down the shore.

The incident brought to mind a singular combat I once witnessed near the head of Lake Chesuncook, which seems too good an item to be lost from the natural history of the State.

I had been spending the day in the neighboring forest, hunting for a black squirrel I had seen there the evening before, having with me a great red-shirted lumberman, named Ben Murch. Not finding our squirrel, we were making our way, towards evening, down through the thick alders which skirted the lake to the shore, in the hope of getting a shot at an otter or a mink; when, on a sudden, a gruff sound—a sort of *quock, quock*, accompanied by a splashing of the water—came to our ears.

“Hush!” ejaculated Ben, clapping his hand to his

ear (as his custom was) to catch the sound. "Hear that? Some sort of a fracas."

And, cautiously pushing through the dense copse, a very singular and comical spectacle met our eyes; for out some two or three rods from the muddy, grassy shore, stood a tall, a very tall, bird, — somewhere from four to five feet, I judged, — with long, thin black legs, and an awkward body slovenly clad in dull gray-blue plumage. The neck was as long as the legs, and the head small, and nearly bare, with a long, yellowish bill. Standing knee-deep in the muddied water, it was, on the whole, about the most ungainly-looking fowl that can well be imagined; while on a half-buried tree-trunk, running out towards it into the water, crouched a wiry black creature, of about average dog size, wriggling a long, restless tail, and apparently in the very act of springing at the long-legged biped in the water. Just now they were eying each other very intently; but, from the splashed and bedraggled appearance of both, it was evident there had been recent hostilities, which, judging from the attitude of the combatants, were about to be renewed.

"Show!" exclaimed Ben, peering over my shoulder from behind. "An old *hairn*, ain't it? Regular old *pokey*. Thought I'd heerd that *quock* before. And that creetur? Let's see. Odd-looking chap. Wish he'd turn his head this way. Fisher, ain't it? Looks like one. Should judge that's a fisher. What in the world got them at loggerheads, I wonder?"

By "hairn" Ben meant heron, the great blue heron of American waters, — *Ardea Herodias* of the naturalists.

The fisher had probably been the assailant; though both had now that intent, tired-down air which marks a long fray. He had no doubt crept up from behind while old long-shanks was quietly frogging along the shore.

But he had found his intended victim a game one. The heron had a character to sustain; and although he might easily have flown away, or even waded farther out, yet he seemed to scorn to do either.

Not an inch would he budge, but stood with his long javelin-like beak poised, ready to strike into the fisher's eye, uttering from moment to moment that menacing, guttural *quock* which had first attracted our attention.

This sound, mingling with the eager snarling and fretting of the fisher, made about the most dismal and incongruous duet I had ever listened to.

For some moments they stood thus threatening and defying each other; but at length, lashing itself up to the proper pitch of fury, the fisher jumped at his antagonist, open-mouthed, to seize hold of the long, slender throat. One bite at the heron's slim neck would settle the whole affair.

But this attempt was very adroitly balked by the plucky old wader's taking a long step aside; when the fisher fell into the water with a great splash, and, while struggling back to the log, received a series of strokes, or rather stabs, from the long, pointed beak, dealt down with wonderful swiftness, and force too; for we distinctly heard them *prod* into the fisher's tough hide as he scrambled upon the log, and ran spitting up the bank.



This defeat, however, was but temporary, as any one acquainted with the singular persistence and perseverance of the whole weasel family will readily guess. The fisher had soon worked his way down the log again, the heron retiring to his former position in the water.

Another succession of quocks and growlings, and another spring, with even less success, on the side of the fisher: for, this time, the heron's bill wounded one of his eyes; and, as he again retreated up the log, we could see the bloody tears trickling down over his shaggy jowl.

Thus far, the battle seemed favorable to the heron; but the fisher again rallied, and now, thoroughly maddened, rushed down the log, and leaped blindly upon his foe.

Again and again his attacks were parried. The snarling growls now rose to shrieks, and the croaking quocks to loud, dissonant cries.

"Faugh!" muttered Ben. "Smell his breath — fisher's breath — clean here. Always let that out of 'em, somehow, when they're mad."

Even at our distance, that strong fetid odor which marks the weasel family could plainly be discerned.

"Old *hairn* seems to be having the best of it," continued Ben. "I bet on him. How cool he keeps! Fights like the Devil! See that bill come down, now! Look at the marks it makes too!" — for the blood, oozing out through the thick fur of the cat in more than a dozen spots, was attesting the prowess of the heron's powerful beak.

But at length, with a sudden bound upward, the

fisher fell with his whole weight upon the back of his lathy antagonist. Old long-legs was upset ; and down they both went in the water, where a prodigious scuffle ensued. Now one of the heron's big feet would be thrust up nearly a yard ; then the cat would come to the top, sneezing and strangling ; and anon the heron's long neck would loop up in sight, bending and doubling about in frantic attempts to peck at its foe, its cries now resembling those of a hen when seized in the night, save that they were louder and harsher.

Over and over they floundered and rolled. The mud and water flew about ; long legs, shaggy paws, wet, wriggling tail, and squawking beak, fur and feathers, all turning and squirming in inextricable confusion. It was hard telling which was having the best of the *mêlée* ; when, on a sudden, the struggle stopped as if by magic.

"One or t'other has given in," muttered Ben.

Looking more closely, we saw that the fisher had succeeded in getting the heron's neck into his mouth. One bite had been sufficient. The fray was over ; and, after holding on a while, the victor, up to his back in water, began moving towards the shore, dragging along with him by the neck the body of the heron, whose great feet came trailing after at an astonishing distance behind.

To see him, wet as a drowned rat, tugging up the muddy bank with his ill-omened and unsightly prey, was indeed a singular spectacle. Whatever had brought on this queer contest, the fisher had won, — fairly, too, for aught I could see ; and I hadn't it in my heart to intercept his retreat.

But Ben, to whom a "black cat" was particularly obnoxious, from its nefarious habit of robbing traps, had no such scruples, and, bringing up his rifle with the careless quickness of an old woodsman, fired before I could interpose a word. The fisher dropped.

Leaving him to take off its skin, — for the fur is worth a trifle, — I was strolling along the shore, when, upon coming under a drooping cedar some six or seven rods from the scene of the fight, another large heron sprang out of a clump of brambles, and stalked off with a croak of distrust. It at once occurred to me that there might be a nest here; and, opening the brambles, lo! there it was, — a broad, clumsy structure of coarse sticks, some two or three feet from the ground, and lined with moss and water-grasses. In it, or rather on it, were two chicks, — heron chicks, — uncouth little things, with long, skinny legs and necks, and sparsely clad with tufts of gray down. And, happening to glance under the nest, I perceived an egg lodged down among the bramble-stalks. It had probably rolled out of the nest. It struck me, however, as being a very small egg from so large a bird; and, having a rule in my pocket, I found it to be but two inches and a half in length by an inch and a half in width. It was of a dull, bluish-white color, without spots, though rather rough and uneven.

On the edge of the nest I saw several small perch, a frog, and a meadow-mouse, all recently brought, though the place had a suspicious odor of carrion.

All this while the old heron had stood at a little distance away, uttering now and then an ominous croak. I could easily have shot it from where I stood, but thought the family had suffered enough for one day.

The presence of the nest accounted for the obstinacy with which the old male heron had contested the ground with the fisher.

Both old birds are said to sit, by turns, upon the eggs. But the nests are not always placed so near the ground as this one. Last summer, while fishing from what is called the "Pappoose's Pond," I discovered one in the very top of a lofty Norway pine, — a huge bunch of sticks and long grass, upon the edge of which one of the old herons was standing on one foot, perfectly motionless, with its neck drawn down, and seemingly asleep.

After dinner, Wash proposed going down to look to the traps we had set for the otters.

"What, on the Lord's Day!" cried the Doctor, who had again settled himself for the perusal of "Foul Play." "Ah, Washington, Washington! I see that your heart is set to do wickedly. Remember whose great name ye bear. Why can't you wait till morning?"

"It's a clear case of humanity," Wash explained. "Mercy toward the poor animals demands that we should not keep them lying there in the traps, suffering, an hour longer than is absolutely necessary."

"Listen not to the self-deceiving sophist," said the Doctor with impressive solemnity to the rest of us. "He differs very little from that sinful man whom the Scriptures describe as laboring all the week to get his — his jack-a-bottom into the pit, for the sake of pulling him out Sunday."

"Whereabouts in the Scriptures do you find that, Doctor?" demanded Wash.

"Hum! I think — I think it's somewhere along near the last of Revelation, said the Doctor, resuming his reading very demurely.

"Come on!" said Wash, much disgusted. "The walk will do us good. And, if there's an otter in the trap, I'll take it upon my soul to put him out of his misery without anybody else participating in the crime."

So we got on our rackets, and went leisurely down the lake. The Doctor did not choose to go with us. He was deeply interested in "Foul Play."

There was nothing stirring about the stump. The trap we had set inside the hole in it was not sprung. We went on down to the bank, and looked over. The one we had set there under water, in the mouth of the burrow, was gone, — drawn up out of sight into the hole, with the chain tight.

"Got him, I guess," said Wash; and, pulling it out by the chain, sure enough, there was a long, sleek black fellow, fast by one of his chubby legs. But he was quite dead, — drowned. The hole opening into the lake was probably full of water for some distance up the burrow. When caught, the otter seemed to have darted into the hole; and, the chain preventing it from going up out of the water, it had struggled there till it had drowned.

The fur was of a creamy-brown color, thickly interspersed with longer black hairs, which gives the animal, at a little distance, the appearance of being wholly black. The ears were small, and far apart; the feet short, and webbed like those of a goose; and the tail rather large and thick. The entire length of the animal, including the tail, was four feet seven inches.

"How do you suppose these fellows live? — wholly upon fish that they catch out in the lake, under the ice?" Raed questioned.

From the absence of tracks leading off from the stump, we could not conjecture any other mode of sustenance. Wash remarked, that it was the opinion of naturalists that the otter feeds principally on fish.

But to fish must be added frogs, eels, and even water-snakes, which the otter frequently seizes upon in warm weather. An old trapper informs me that he once came upon an otter devouring a hare it had but just captured; and an old citizen of Somerset County tells the rather tough story of an otter that regularly watched for and caught *woodchucks*. That the otter sometimes preys upon the young of water-fowl, I can confirm from my own observation of its habits. A few years since, while acting as assistant engineer during the survey of one of our back townships, I had occasion to pass and repass for a whole week along the bank of a certain *flowed* "thoroughfare" connecting two small lakes. It was a crooked stream; one sharp bend in particular enclosing a low, narrow "point" of six or eight rods extent.

Out at the very extremity of this point, and standing partly in the water now that the stream was flowed, was a low, scrubby cedar. Its wide, drooping lower limbs were partly submerged in the water. I had noticed it from the other shore at some distance below.

Among the boughs of this cedar, up eight or ten feet, was a wood-duck's nest, — the prettiest and most interesting of all the wild ducks in our northern waters.

The young ones were hatched. There were nine of the little yellow downy chicks. I could have easily shot the old ones, but forbore, and very soon became much interested in watching their movements in their reedy, sylvan home.

On the fifth day they began to leave the nest. I do not know whether this was caused by the mother-bird, or was prompted by instinct on the part of the young ones. They were far from being large enough to fly; but one by one, during the day, they scrambled over the edge of the nest, and fluttered down into the water.

Some of them seemed to merely fall without using their wings at all. Once in the water, they were at home, and floated off among the rushes like egg-shells. There was something amusing in their familiarity with the water. Buoyant as corks, there was no danger of their drowning. They had only to draw back their tiny necks and sit quiet, or paddle on at pleasure.

The mother-duck swam back and forth, piloting out each chick as it fluttered down. When, at length, they had all left the nest, she swam away into the open water, with the whole flock tossing and rippling about her. It was a very pretty sight.

Late in the afternoon she came back under the nest with her brood; and they sat all night, clustered together beneath the cedar-boughs. After sunrise the next morning, they started again for the open water. As I came past, I saw them sail out through the reeds toward the channel. The old one seemed to be feeding them on some sort of water-bugs.

The current bore some of them occasionally away

from the mother; though, as soon as they were ten or a dozen feet from her, they would exert themselves to get back. One of them, however, was hardly strong enough to breast the current. Notwithstanding his efforts to reach the mother, he was carried farther and farther down the stream.

The old duck didn't seem to notice his trouble: she was absorbed with the other eight. It quite excited my sympathies to see him borne so relentlessly away. When he had been carried forty or fifty feet from the rest of the brood, there was a great splash, and the chick suddenly disappeared under the water.

The old duck heard the splash. She glanced suspiciously around, seemed to miss one of her brood, and at once swam along to where a bubble or two struggled up to the surface of the stream. Turning her head down, she looked into the water, eagerly scanning the depths below; then, going back, gathered the chicks together, and hurried towards the shore, as if apprehending further danger.

But what sort of a creature had pulled down the poor little duckling so remorselessly?

I concluded that it was a muskrat which had his mud-house over on the other bank of the thoroughfare, and, watching my chance, sent a ball through the creature just as he was getting up on the roof of his house to enjoy the afternoon sun. Without a single sound or complaint, the poor little victim rolled off into the water, and floated down with the current.

By the next morning, the old duck had forgotten her loss. She again took her brood out into the stream. I



watched them for a time floating about so prettily. There were eight of them. Something drew my attention from them for a few minutes. When I again looked, there were but seven.

I began to regret the summary justice I had dealt to the muskrat. Poor fellow! — killed on mere suspicion.

Then I surmised it to have been a snake, and, feeling interested, launched my skiff, and, getting in, paddled to the spot. The old duck instantly sailed back among the rushes, with all the little ones bobbing after her. The water was ten or fifteen feet deep, and the bottom muddy. I could just discern the old sunken logs lying bedded in the mud. Then I searched along both banks, for twenty rods or more, for water-snakes, and saw several sunning themselves on old tree-trunks that projected into the stream; but neither of them seemed the criminal for which I was in search.

The duck did not desert her home under the cedar. Next morning saw her leading out her brood once more. My curiosity was roused; and I determined to watch sharply to see if another chick was taken. The young ones could now swim much better than on the first day. They paddled from the mother in all directions, some to a distance of several rods. They had not been feeding more than fifteen minutes, when another disappeared under the water with a quick splash. Something black glanced up from the surface of the stream the same instant. It was so smartly done, that I believed it to be a fish; and, if a fish, why not fish for it?

An idea occurred to me. The day before, I had stumbled upon a partridge-nest containing a dozen or more

chicks but just hatched. It was a rather cruel thing; but I determined to use one of them for bait. I went out to the nest, brought one, and put it in the bottom of the skiff to keep it from running away; then tied two strong pickerel-lines together, at the end of which was a stout hook attached to gimp.

Not to kill the partridge-chick, and thus lose the advantage of *live bait*, I tied it to the hook quite closely, yet not so as to prevent the use of its legs or wings; and, to make it all float, attached a cork I happened to have in my pocket. This done, I raised the other end of the line upon a high pole so that it would clear the rushes, and then threw the hook and bait out into the middle of the stream, considerably above the spot where the duck had been caught, so that they might float down past the cedar. The little partridge fluttered and splashed as the current bore it away; but the cork kept it from sinking. It floated on: there were no bites. I drew in the line, and threw it again; and again it floated past on the sluggish stream. But, at the third throw, there came the same quick splash as when the duckling was seized; and down went the chick. Instantly the line tightened with a jerk, but held. There was a great pulling to and fro, accompanied by a waving motion of the water. I pulled on the line, but did not attempt to draw it in, lest the heavy strain should break it. Whipping it round a sapling, and jumping into the skiff, I paddled out into the stream; but, before I had come over the spot where the line was fast, a large brown-black creature floated up to the surface, half drowned. It was a good-sized female otter.

Afterwards I found its burrow under the opposite bank, with two pretty, pale, pink-gray cubs, seemingly about a fortnight old.

On reaching camp, we found the Doctor "wholly unconscious" in "Foul Play." He didn't so much as notice our otter, — a compliment for Mr. Reade; or else he did not wish to give countenance to our breakage of the sabbath.

The weather was dull, dark, and cloudy. A mist had begun to fall, not just like a summer mist; but the snow "gave" under it. Mingled with the damp murk, there fell an occasional snowflake large as a feather. It dulled even the red ardor of our old pine-fire.

"A dismal night," Raed observed.

Out in the woods, the *hoots* of an owl came dolefully at intervals, — one of the most depressing sounds to which the darkening woods echo, and known to the settlers as a sure sign of rain. As we sat listening, the peculiar querulous screech of a lucivee came faintly from the far mountain-side; answered, a moment later, down in the swamp. Even the wild beasts were complainingly affected; and anon there began that wild lonely note to which the autumn woods so frequently resound at eventide.

"What's that? — that noise?" exclaimed the Doctor, looking up from his dusky pages.

Just then the plaintive alto call, with its prolonged quavers, was repeated.

"By Jove, if that isn't a queer sound!" cried the Doctor. "An Indian devil, ain't it?"

"That's a raccoon, Doctor," I said.

"A 'coon! Possible! No idea that they made such a noise as that."

Wade remarked that it reminded him of the nights we had camped out at Katahdin.

"But 'coons are usually denned up at this season," observed Wash, "if I read correctly."

We supposed that the "warm spell" had invited it out. A thaw often wakes up the raccoons, even at mid-winter. The note was repeated at intervals of about half a minute for some time. But the creature was moving off; and presently the sounds died out in the distance. A more mysterious noise had begun, however, low, at first, as the sigh of the wind, but increasing in loudness as the twilight faded in the damp darkness of the night. It came from far down the lake.

"It's a sudden storm coming on," Raed had said at first.

"But it can't be," he added a few minutes later. "That's not the wind."

An unknown sound is always disquieting. Wash got up uneasily to throw on more wood.

Thus far, the noises had seemed to come from the lower end of the lake, seven or eight miles away; but, as he stood poking the fire, they suddenly drew nearer. A deep groan rose nigh at hand. We all jumped to our feet, with our eyes strained on the great white expanse stretching off under the black heavens. It seemed down by the islands, — a smothered moaning; then, on a sudden, it came rushing up, and passed on toward the head of the lake, — vast billowy grumblings, accompanied by a fearful muffled gurgling, a plunging of

waters under the ice and the deep snow, as of some huge aquatic monster, mad from confinement, and struggling for breath. The Doctor had dropped his novel: for once he looked frightened. Wash and Wade glanced superstitiously at each other. Raed looked inquiringly to me.

“Ever hear any thing like that before?” he asked.

I had, but never so loud, so terrific. It was the roaring and groaning of the air under the ice, — a phenomenon not uncommon on our Northern lakes during the frozen season, at the beginning of a thaw. The cause is probably the expansion which the air under the ice and in the water undergoes with the relaxation of the intense cold. The prodigious sheet of ice, with its load of snow, — millions of tons, — presses down upon the water; and the surplus of air, from expansion, sets its currents under the ice toward some point of less resistance, — the shore, or some tiny air-hole. These subteraqueous currents, rushing along with the speed of race-horses and the force of locomotives, occasion the groaning and roaring sounds. Any thing more dismal can hardly be imagined, or more startling, at first, to one ignorant of the cause.

The Doctor could hardly receive the explanation as sufficient; and, indeed, I had never heard any thing quite like this in the volume of sound, and absurd effect on the ear. Altogether, it makes one of the most vivid recollections of our hunt. There was a sort of unearthliness about it. We sat there attempting to read till after nine o'clock: but the sounds claimed our attention in the main, increasing steadily in loudness and hor-

rid intonation, — now a long-drawn moan, merging suddenly in a hollow gurgling; then a swift, cutting sound, like the rush of the wind through narrow cracks, ending in mournful murmurs. These all, from some conformation of the ice or the shores, seemed to start miles down the lake, and come roaring and gurgling up to its very head.

We turned in, and finally went to sleep; though the sounds continued unabated.

Late in the night, Raed waked me. He was up.

“Just come out a moment,” he said, “and listen.”

The lake seemed convulsed with agony. It was really affrighting. Not a breath of air stirred the woods. Every thing was dark and still, save for the restless bellowings from those subterglacial chambers. Coming on the stillness, each groan seemed to thrill the listening forests.

“I should think that all the demons in Bale were struggling, charging, fighting their way up from hell, only to souse and drown each other down there under the ice,” was Raed’s comment, given in sober earnest too. It struck me as involving a very forcible figure; and I determined to remember it at the time.

## EIGHTH DAY.

Going the Round of the Traps. — A Lively Scrimmage. — Not a Loupcervier, but a "Bay Lynx." — Story of a Bay Lynx. — Our Third Otter. — Fishing through the Ice again. — A New Excitement. — The Doctor's *Baby*. — "Come, Baby, come down: we won't hurt you." — A "Bad Sell." — Anecdote of a Fisher and a Raccoon.

IT was broken weather next morning, with a light west wind. The thermometer had fallen from thirty-nine degrees above to thirty-four degrees above. The noises from the lake had ceased; but we all retained confused recollections of "terrible carryings-on" in the night. The Doctor was moody. He never heard of a lake *so distressingly afflicted with colic before*. 'Twas entirely out of his line of practice.

We went off to examine our traps directly after breakfast, — all but the Doctor: he staid to finish "Foul Play." The one set alone beside the second muck-hole held a small lynx, — a last spring kitten apparently. The two clogs had been too heavy for it to drag off. We found it not three rods from where the trap had been set. Wash despatched it — scientifically.

One of the traps at the fox-bones had been sprung,

and dragged some rods ; but the beast had shaken it off. A handful of gray fur still clung in the jaws ; but the bait which had hung over it had not been taken.

The trap in the lynx-trail leading up the mountain-side was gone, — both clogs with it too ! The creature (as we saw by its trail) had made a bolt, and gone straight up the mountain-side at a place where it was very steep. It did not seem likely that it could have gone any great distance. We followed immediately. But half a dozen rods up among the spruces, we came upon one of the clogs shaken off.

Wade had pushed on while we stopped to look at the clog. A moment later he called to us, and fired. We ran up.

“Sighted him — for just a second !” Wade exclaimed. “Saw his gray back ! Hark !”

We could hear the trap clatter as the animal climbed up among the rocks.

“Be on the lookout ! He won’t run far up here without stopping to rest,” panted Wash as we climbed up, catching hold of the prickly branches.

We worked our way to the bottom of a mass of overhanging rocks ; when, hearing a noise as of claws scratching on bare stones, we looked cautiously, and saw the animal in a sort of fissure or great crevice. But, the instant I raised the rifle, it growled, and drew back out of sight ; and, climbing up a little nearer, we could see that the fissure led back into a dark hole.

“Got a den there,” said Raed.

“What’s to be done ? How shall we get at him ?” Wade demanded.



"Ought to have Grip here," replied Raed. "You stay here, and keep the game in; I'll go back to camp for him."

Off he went; and the rest of us stood guard with cocked guns. In the course of fifteen minutes we heard voices, and soon saw them coming, — Raed and Grip, with the Doctor hard behind. The Doctor had a pole. Grip came dashing on ahead of them, and ran straight up to the mouth of the den.

"A cat, is it?" said the Doctor, climbing up. "S-t! take him, Grip! — take him!"

Grip rushed in; and a prodigious uproar ensued, — growls, barks, and snarls, — in the midst of which the hound sprang out, with two pale, bright spots in the blackness behind him. The poor dog's ears were woefully slit; and there were several long scratches on his nose and jowl. He whined, and cast a reproachful look at the Doctor for getting him into such a scrape.

"Too bad!" commiserated Wade.

"Hound can't manage him," said Raed. "Might have fired at his *eyes* when he chased Grip out, if we had been ready."

The *eyes* had now vanished. The den was a dark one.

"Let's get bark, make a torch, and run it in on the pole," suggested Wash. "Perhaps we can shoot him."

Some shreds of bark were peeled from a white-birch standing near. These were lighted, and stuck upon the end of the pole.

"Now be ready to shoot," said Wash, thrusting it slowly in.

The light disclosed a damp, dark hole, which, at a

little distance, turned off behind great rocks. The creature had gone in back of these; and, to get the torch in toward him, Wash was reaching in with the pole. All at once there was a *spit*. Wash jumped back, and tried to draw out the pole, but only got it crosswise. Out leaped the cat with the trap, and, striking blindly against the pole, swept us all down the rocks with it in a heap together.

There was a great din and shouting. The other barrel of the shot-gun went off accidentally. 'Twas a wonder we hadn't slaughtered each other. But, saving a few bumps and grazings, nobody was hurt; and, picking ourselves up, we saw the creature running off through the snow, down into the woods, dragging the trap, with Grip in hot pursuit. Away they went. But Grip was soon so close upon it, that it faced about at the foot of a great beech.

"Load up quick!" cried Raed. "We'll have him yet!"

Wash made up toward it with the rifle. The creature was so taken up with the hound, that it didn't seem to notice him. The dog was barking excitedly. We could also hear the cat growl. Wash fired; and the animal fell over into the snow. Grip rushed in and throttled it.

On examining it, we found that it was not like the other lynxes we had caught. Its feet, instead of being padded with fur on the bottoms, were bare as a dog's. The tassels, too, on its ears, were less distinct; and its fur was not of so fine a shade: it was a duller gray. Its shape also differed: it was more lathy.



OUT LEAPED THE CAT WITH THE TRAP.



Both Mr. Burleigh and myself felt sure it was a *Bay lynx*, instead of the *loup-cervier*. Though I had seen but two individuals of the *Bay lynx*, yet this animal struck me as bearing a marked resemblance to the first of these, which is inseparably connected with a very exciting incident of boyhood.

About half a mile to the westward of the writer's former residence, Oxford County, there is a rocky precipice known as the "Fall-off," since it falls off at the end of the ridge upon which the half-dozen farms which made up our little rustic neighborhood were situated.

Going out through the pastures, one comes suddenly upon the very brink of it, and may look down a hundred and fifty feet into a wild, inky-looking sheet of water called "Winona's Pond;" for Winona, a pretty Indian girl, jumped over here into the pond (at least, that's what they say) years ago, when the Pequawkets lived in these woods.

Some say it was because her lover had deserted her for another pretty squaw; and another story is that he had been taken prisoner, and burned to death, by a band of Mohawks, who sometimes used to come down the Kennebec and Penobscot in their war-canoes. Whichever is true, the poor maiden must have been in a desperate state of mind; for a bare glance over into the waters beneath is enough to make one's "hair stand."

Down some fifty feet from the top there is a narrow crevice, or rather shelf, running along the side, only a few feet in width, but always damp and mossy from the trickling waters. And here a pine-tree—a tall,

slender trunk, almost rubbing against the rocks — has grown up, the green boughs of its top just visible as you come out through the pasture toward the brink of the crag.

My grandfather's farm was the last one on the ridge, — the one nearest the "Fall-off;" and the sheep-pasture extended out to it.

It was in "harvesting-time," — last of September. I had gone down to "salt" the sheep one morning. Grandfather had a small flock of Southdowns, — a breed lately imported, of which he was very proud.

They were great pets, and very tame. But this morning they failed to appear in answer to call.

Thinking they had perhaps jumped the fence, I kept on, calling as I went, down toward the lower side of the pasture; when, on coming near the edge of the crag, a sad sight met my eyes.

There lay the whole flock huddled together. At first I had thought they were asleep, and ran toward them to scare them up. But they did not stir; and I soon saw that their white faces were dabbled with blood. Eleven of them lying there, — all dead! — not torn in pieces, nor mangled; but each had a great gaping bite in the neck, where the life-blood had been sucked out.

What blood-thirsty beast had done this?

Dogs, bad ones, sometimes kill sheep; but no dog would have made such a wholesale slaughter, I felt sure. Wolves, perhaps. I ran back to the house with the sad tidings.

Grandfather could scarcely believe my story, and

went hastily down. He had taken so much pains to procure them, that it was a bitter disappointment.

"No, no," said he, gazing sorrowfully upon his dead favorites; "not wolves' work: they tear and mangle."

"Perhaps it was a bear," said Judson Edwards (the Edwardses owned the farm above), who had run to the pasture with us.

"Not a bear, either. A bear wouldn't have killed more than one or two at a time; and you would have seen the *pelt* taken off, and rolled up as nicely as a butcher could have done it. It was some creature of the cat kind. It ought to be destroyed, or it will kill all the sheep in the neighborhood."

"Might leave one of the dead sheep here over night, and we'll come and watch for him," suggested the quick-witted Jud.

"Yes; we can do that," said grandfather. "I have no doubt the creature will be back as soon as it is dark. Load your guns; put in a good grist of heavy shot: and, if he does come back, don't fail to kill him."

As soon as it was fairly dark, Jud and I sallied out with our old "flint-lock" guns well charged, and, lying down behind an old log seven or eight rods from the dead sheep, began our vigils.

An hour passed. It had grown dark. Down by the cliff we could still distinguish the white fleece; and we kept our eyes on it.

"Isn't there something there?" whispered Jud at length. "Look sharp!"

A dark object seemed occasionally to come between us and the white wool; and by and by we heard a sort of *craunching* noise, as if bones were being gnawed.

"He's there!" muttered Jud. "Let's fire!"

Taking as good aim as we could over the log, we blazed away.

A growl followed the reports; and the dark form glided off toward the crag. A moment later, we heard the boughs of the pine rustle; and there was a scratching noise, as if the creature were descending the trunk.

"We didn't hit him!" shouted Jud. "He's gone down the rocks by the tree!"

We ran up as near as we dared to get; but there was nothing to be seen or heard now.

"He has a den down among the rocks, probably," said grandfather, on hearing the result of our watch.

The next morning, we all went down to reconnoitre. The carcass had been nearly devoured during the night: the beast had probably returned to eat it after we had gone home. There were no signs of a den, though, from the top of the cliff. We could not see over the cliff very well, it was so nearly perpendicular: but the top of the pine looked as if something had jumped into it; and there were scratches up and down the trunk.

"He has a den down there somewhere," said grandfather. "Strong place too."

A strong place indeed. No person would want to venture down over those ragged rocks after him, certainly. That afternoon, Jud and I went round the crag down to the pond.

Old Hughy Watson, who used to fish and trap about there, had a canoe, made from a pine-log, — a "dug-out" he called it, — hitched to an ash-stump not far off. Get-



ting into this, we paddled opposite the "Fall-off" to see if we could discover the den. The water was very black and deep there, and the cliff seemed to overhang the pond. The shelf on which the pine grew was fully a hundred feet from the water; and the tree itself looked like a little sapling. But, on getting within ten or a dozen rods of the side, we discerned a fissure, or hole, a few yards from the foot of the pine.

"That must be the mouth of the den," said Jud, — "the place where he goes in. He stays there days, and comes out nights to prowl about."

We had stopped paddling; and, while we were looking up to the rocks, a large gray creature crept out of the hole, and, walking cautiously along the shelf, sharpened its claws in the trunk of the pine, stretched, and then crouched down in the sun.

We had taken our guns; but it was much too far and too high to hit him.

"Let's fire, though," said Jud.

Aiming out of the stern of the canoe, we let another dose of shot fly at him, and heard it rattle on the rocks. The animal jumped up, spit like a cat, and crawled hastily back into the fissure.

"Spoiled his nap, anyhow," said Jud. "Tell you what we can do, though," continued he as we paddled back along. "We can borrow old Hughy's bear-trap, and set it at the top of the crag, at the place where he jumps out of the pine."

Hughy was quite willing to lend us his trap when he heard what a loss grandfather had met with. It was a monstrous thing, weighing seventy or eighty pounds.

the jaws were armed with large, sharp teeth, which matched together; and the springs were so stiff, that even Hughy had to use a lever to bend them into place when he set it. Putting it on a stout pole between us, we tugged it down to the ledge; and, using the pole for a lever, managed, after a great deal of prying, to set it. Then we chained it to the root of a stump, placing it in such a way, that, when the creature jumped from the top of the pine to the rocks, he would be likely to jump into it.

"Once let him get his paw in there," said Jud, "and he'll have to wait and settle his mutton-bill."

The next morning, we ran down in expectation of finding a prisoner; but we found the trap just as we had placed it. It was evident that the beast had been out of his den, though; for the carcass was nearly all devoured. He had dined, and gone back. He probably couldn't see any good reason for jumping into the trap, as long as he could jump over it.

We now changed the position of the trap, and covered it with dry grass to conceal it from sight. During the night, he finished the mutton, but did not condescend to step into the trap. He must have taken a long leap aside.

"I do believe he will outwit us, after all," said Jud, peeping over into the abyss. "If we could only set the trap down there on that shelf at the foot of the tree, he would have to go over it then, it's so narrow there."

"Yes; but how are we to get the trap down there?" was my query.

"We can let it down with a rope, and hitch the rope

up here at the top. If he gets into it, we can draw him up."

"It would take a long rope, and a strong one too."

"Yes. That one on the old 'tackle and fall' would do: that's both long and strong."

We got the rope, and, looping one end of it round the stump, tied the other to the trap, all set as it was, and, easing it over the edge, let it slide down the rocks. But it kept springing. We had to draw it up and reset it half a dozen times. Finally, however, we got it safely lodged on the shelf near the foot of the pine.

"Have hard work to jump by that," said Jud. "He has to walk pretty cautiously along that shelf."

Fastening the rope securely at the top, we left it for night to decide.

Early the next morning, a frightful snarling and growling began to be heard even at the house; and, running hastily down through the pasture, we beheld the upper end of the rope convulsed by frantic jerks from below.

"We have a *bite* at last, I guess," laughed Jud.

Peering over, we could just see him, — a great fierce-looking creature, caught by one foot, and dangling over the edge of the shelf. No wonder he snarled!

Grandfather followed us down.

"Draw him up, boys," said he after taking a look over. "We will put the poor brute out of his agony as soon as we can. You draw him up, and I'll stand ready to shoot him as soon as he is in sight."

It was about as much as we could do; but, tugging hard, we slowly pulled up the rope. The growls filled

the air, and, resounding from the rocks, echoed across the pond. He didn't like to come, and was constantly springing and jerking.

Of course we were anxious to have the shooting part done before he arrived at the top of the cliff.

"Now, be sure to hit him, grandfather," said Jud; "because he might chew us up if you don't!"

"Yes, yes! Pull steady!"

But, while still a few yards from the top, the creature caught his claws into a crevice, and, with a sudden leap upward, showed his wild, fierce face over the edge. Seized with a panic, we let go the rope, and down he went. Trap and beast together, falling fifty feet, were too much for the rope: it snapped. A wild yell rang up. We heard the trap clanking and clattering down the rocks, and anon a sullen plunge far below, and saw the widening ripples chase each other out into the pond.

Going round, and down to the shore, we took the canoe, and paddled to the spot. The broken end of the rope was still floating. Taking hold of it, we drew up the trap, and with it the animal, — drowned, of course.

That was a memorable incident for us boys. I well recollect how the creature looked, and at once identified it from memory as of the same species with the one we had just killed.

After dinner we went down the lake to see to the other traps, the Doctor remaining to "find out how *Robert Penfold* came out;" for the adventure of the forenoon had interrupted his novel-reading.

We found the last of the three otters in the trap under the bank. But this one had not drowned: it had

crawled up the icy bank far enough to get its head above water. Wash shot it. After taking off its skin, we went out to the "hole" to fish. The thaw had opened it afresh. Possibly it had served as an air-hole during the previous evening.

Two hours of angling gave us a trout and two small pickerel only; in all, about five pounds. We wondered whether the subteraqueous groanings had affrighted the fish.

On getting up to camp, we found the Doctor gone. There lay his novel on the hemlock. He had probably finished it, and gone out for a walk. It was near sunset. We began to prepare supper.

On a sudden the Doctor came in, brimful of excitement.

"Well, I never!" he exclaimed. "Drollest thing!"

"Why, what is it, Doctor?" we all demanded.

"Just you come out here to the swamp!" cried the Doctor. "Come quick!" And, catching up one of the *blankets*, he strode off again. The spider was hastily set aside. We resumed our snow-shoes, and followed after him as fast as possible; but he had gained quite a start. We did not come up with him till he had entered among the cedars, and was coming out upon one of the open holes, which looked still broader and muddier since the thaw. On the very edge where the icy snow bordered the black muck, the Doctor drew up. "There!" he exclaimed. "For pity's sake, just look here!" pointing to the mud. "Them's what gets me! *Little baby's feet!*"

We all stared. Sure enough, there in the mud were

some little footprints not more than three or four inches long, toes and all, as plain as could be, patted down into the soft muck. Some *little foot* had evidently run along there not many minutes ago. "Just made too!" continued the Doctor. Then, after a hurried glance around, he stooped to examine them. Wash winked to me, then to Raed and Wade, who were regarding us with curious looks. We all choked down a great grin. Unless we were much mistaken, we had a "soft thing" on the Doctor. "Well, if this don't beat the Dutch!" resumed the Doctor, standing back a step. "There isn't a house within fifteen miles, that I know of. How the little thing ever got up here is more than I can guess; but (stooping down again) it's a baby's foot fast enough."

"It may be that an Indian family is camping about here, not far off," suggested the hypocritical Wash. "Perhaps this is a little pappoose."

"Barefooted too," observed Wade; "or else nothing but a very thin moccason. Look at those little toe-marks! Can't be over a year and a half or two years old."

"Poor little thing, it must be lost!" remarked the Doctor reflectively, and with a touch of feeling which did him credit, but came near making us shout with suppressed merriment. "And, boys," cried he with sudden gravity, "we must try to hunt it up. Poor baby, here all alone in the dark swamp! He can't be far off, either."

"If it's a lost child, we certainly ought to hunt it up," said Raed.

"And, if it's a little pappoose, I should like to see it," remarked Wade.

"Mere common humanity demands that we find the *lost baby*," Wash affirmed.

So we all began to search along the borders of the muck-hole with affected zeal; but the Doctor was in earnest.

"Ah! there's where he stopped to play in the mud. See where his little fingers clawed it up there!" said he. "And here's where he clambered up on to the snow; and out here is another track. He's left the hole, and gone off into the woods."

Here and there we could still see the little footprints close together on the damp snow as we hurried on.

"See where he broke off those tender sprouts!" Wash noticed. "Little cub! Isn't it curious? I wonder where his mother is. I've heard of children's being carried off by wild beasts, and so growing up to make 'wild men.' Perhaps we've stumbled upon an example!"

"Like enough," said the Doctor.

Luckily it was getting too dark for him to see our faces.

"I declare, he walks well for a little one!" said Wade after a while. "Why, we've come as much as a quarter of a mile from the muck-hole!"

A few moments after, we came out to a large yellow birch-tree, or rather stub; for it was all decayed, and evidently hollow, having a great open hole in the trunk at the roots. The little foot-marks led directly towards this hole.

"You don't suppose he's crawled into that hole, do you?" asked the Doctor. "I declare, he has!" continued he, pointing to a track in the wet punk within the aperture. 'Gone in there, as I live!"

We all took a look.

The inside of the tree had rotted away; and the hollow cavity extended both upward and downward into the root beneath the ground, — a dark hole indeed.

"Fell in there, I'm afraid!" exclaimed the Doctor. "Baby, little chuck! are you down there? Likely as anyway there's water at the bottom! If it weren't so dark down there! — Got any matches, boys? Let's make a torch."

I pulled off a crispy roll of the curled bark, and, lighting it, let it down into the opening. The Doctor had not thought of looking *up* the hollow trunk. Nobody *would expect a baby to climb a tree, of course*. But, the moment we put in the fire, there was a great scrambling overhead on the inside; and a shower of dust and punk came rattling down.

"Gracious!" exclaimed the Doctor. "The little rascal is *up*, instead of *down*! I don't believe it is a child. But that *is a baby's foot* fast enough," said he, stepping back, and again examining the track. "Yes, little brat! Scared, I suppose. How he can climb! They say little babies can swim too. I shouldn't wonder if they *did* make 'wild men' in just this way."

Then, in a coaxing voice, "Come, baby, come down. We won't hurt you. Oh, no! we'll take you to your mother."

But the baby gave no indications of coming down;



and, despite the dust which filled the aperture, the Doctor again poked in his head to see if he couldn't discern him.

"Light another piece of bark, Kit," said he, "and let me take it. I can see something up there; but I'll be skinned if it looks like a baby!"

I got the bark; and, putting it on the end of a stick, we thrust it up the hollow, and saw, up some ten or twelve feet, not exactly a baby, but a big *raccoon*, peering cautiously down, with his visage turned askew as if he thought it a more than commonly good joke.

"Sold!" ejaculated the Doctor, pulling out his head, and gazing comically at the little track. "Well, I never knew that before! — a raccoon makes a track just like a little child's! Well, live and learn. I've been completely 'done for.' *Go for me*, boys! I won't say a word! Go for me as much as you're a mind to! But, for pity's sake, don't tell of this in town, boys," he added pathetically a moment later. "'Twould be the ruination of me. Confound that raccoon! *Let's give it to him!*"

It was hard to see wherein the 'coon was to blame, and harder still to get at him.

"Might cut down the tree," Wash suggested.

But the axe was back at the camp.

"Perhaps we could smoke him out," said Raed.

Several of the bark-rolls were lighted, and placed in the cavity.

But it would have taken a long time to smoke him out at that rate, had not the inside of the tree been dry. It caught fire from the torches, and the flames ran up-

ward. In a moment, the whole inside of the tree was ablaze. Flame and smoke spouted out from the old knot-holes and at the top. It drew like a chimney.

"Goodness!" exclaimed Wash. "Hear it roar! 'Coony can't stand that long, I know!"

And he didn't. Very soon we heard something drop; and out rolled the 'coon at the bottom of the stump, coiled up like a ball. He was well singed, and apparently suffocated.

I did not believe he was dead, however; and, cutting some limber birch-withs, we proceeded to tie his legs before he came to his breath again. One glance at his little, slim black feet, told the whole story about the *baby-tracks*.

We slung him across a pole, and started for camp. He soon began to realize his situation, and wriggled about prodigiously. We determined to keep him a few days at least; and, after reaching camp, put a collar of birch-withs about his neck, and chained him with one of the other trap-chains to a poplar-sapling a few rods from the fire.

It was past eight before we could prepare supper; but the fun we had had at the Doctor's expense was our recompense. He bore it all with an occasional shrug.

Along in the night, a prodigious uproar — growling, barking, and yelping — awoke us. Grip had got loose, and fallen tooth and nail upon the Doctor's *baby*. Before we got out, the hound had throttled it; though, judging from the noise, there must have been a pretty sharp fight. Indeed, a raccoon is often found fully a match for a smart dog.

The circumstance recalled a fight I once witnessed between a fisher and a raccoon.

Some years ago, while in the northern part of Maine, I spent the month of September, and a portion of October, at a "hay-farm" on the borders of Chamberlain Lake, — Lake Apmoogenegamook, the Indians used to call it. The whole region was an almost unbroken wilderness. Game was plenty; and, by way of recreation from my duties as "surveyor," I had set up a "line of traps" for mink and sable along a rapid, noisy stream called "Bear Brook," which comes down into the lake through a gorge between two high, spruce-clad mountains.

Huge bowlders had rolled down the sides, and lay piled along the bed of the gorge. The brook, which was the outlet of a small pond pent up among the ridges above, foamed and roared, and gurgled down among rocks shaded by thick black spruces which leaned out from the sides of the ravine.

It was a wild place. I had stumbled upon it one afternoon some weeks before, and knew it must be good trapping-ground: for the rocks, and the clear, black pools, in short, the whole place, had that peculiar fishy smell which bespoke an abundance of trout; and, where trout abound, there are sure to be mink.

My traps were of that sort which hunters call "figure-four" traps, — made of stakes and poles, with a figure-four spring. Perhaps some of our boy-readers may have caught squirrels in that way. For bait, I used trout from the brook. I carried my hook and line with me, and, after setting a trap, threw in my hook, and pulled

out trout enough to bait it. My line extended about a mile up the gorge, and comprised some twenty-five or thirty traps.

After setting them, I shot a number of red squirrels for a "drag," and thus connected the traps together. Perhaps I should explain that a *drag* is a bundle of squirrels or partridges newly killed, and from which the blood is dripping, which are dragged along by a with from trap to trap to make a trail and scent, so that the mink and sable will follow it.

It is customary to visit mink-traps once in two or three days; but, as I had plenty of time just then, I went to mine every forenoon.

During the first week after setting them, I had excellent luck. I caught eleven mink and three sable, — about fifty dollars' worth, as I reckoned it. My hopes of making a small fortune in the fur-business were very sanguine, until, one morning, I found every trap torn up. The poles and stakes were scattered over the ground; spindles were broken to pieces; and, at one or two places where there had been a mink in the trap, the head, and bits of fur, were lying about, as if it had been devoured.

At first, I thought that perhaps some fellow who had intended to trap there had done the mischief, to drive me away (a very common trick among rival trappers); but, when I saw that the mink had been torn to pieces, I knew the destruction was the work of some animal, — a fisher, most likely, or, as some call it, a "black-cat."

I had never yet seen one of these creatures, but had often heard hunters and trappers tell what pests they were, — following them on their rounds, robbing and

tearing up their traps almost as rapidly as they could set them.

Well, I had nothing to do but to set the traps again; a task which I did in the course of the day, really hoping the beast had merely paid the place a transient visit, and gone on upon his wanderings.

But the next morning showed my hopes were vain; for he had "gone through" my *line* again, and every trap was upset. It really seemed as if the "varmint" had taken a malicious delight in tearing them to pieces. At one of the traps, a fine sable had been caught; and, as if for very mischief, the marauder had torn the beautiful skin, which was worth six or seven dollars, to shreds.

Surely, if there is a business in the world that demands patience and perseverance, it is trapping: at least, it took about all I could summon to go resignedly to work, make new spindles, catch fresh bait, and set the traps again, especially with the prospect of having the same task to perform the next morning.

I went at it, however, and by eleven o'clock had them all reset save one (the upper one), where the sable had been caught; when, on approaching it, through the thick spruces I saw a large raccoon gnawing the sable's head. Seeing me at the same instant, he caught up the head, and, before I could unsling my gun, scuttled away out of sight.

Was it possible that a 'coon had been doing all this mischief? I knew them to be adepts at a variety of woods' tricks, but had never heard of their robbing traps before. Here was one caught gnawing a sable's head in the vicinity of the broken traps. Circumstantial evidence, at least, was strong against him.

I determined to watch — that trap at least.

Going over to our camp on the lake, I took a hasty lunch, and, putting a fresh charge into my gun, went back to the ravine. A few rods from the place where I had surprised the 'coon, there was a thick clump of low spruces. Here I hid myself, and began my watch.

The afternoon dragged away. Crows and hawks cawed and screamed; kingfishers and squirrels chattered and chirred: but no animal came near the trap. The sun was setting behind the high black mountain, and twilight began to dim the narrow valley.

Thinking I had had my labor for my pains, I was about crawling out of my hiding-place, when a twig snapped in the direction of the traps; and, turning quickly, I saw the 'coon coming up the bank of the brook, — the same one, I was sure, that I had seen before, because of its unusual size.

With a glance around to see that there was no danger near, he ambled along to the spot where the sable's head had been, and began sniffing at the shreds and bits of fur which lay about. Wishing to see if he would touch the trap, I did not stir, but watched his movements.

After picking up the bits of skin, he walked round the trap several times, with his queer, quizzical face askew, examining it. Then, happening to scent one of the sable's legs which lay at a little distance, he ran to it, and began to eat it. I could hear his sharp teeth upon the bones. Suddenly he stopped, listened, then growled. Very much to my surprise, there was an answering growl; then another and another response.

In a moment more, from behind a great rock in the bank there stole out a large black animal, an object of the 'coon's utter abhorrence evidently.

Fresh growls greeted the appearance of the intruder, who came stealthily forward. He was a wicked-looking fellow, and had, evidently, hostile intentions.

The 'coon rose to his feet, lifting his back like a bear or a cat, and growling all the while. The new-comer crouched almost to the earth, but continued to steal up to the 'coon until within a yard or two.

There they stood, facing each other, getting more angry every moment; and evidently intended to have a big "set-to." I had no wish to interfere, and was contented to remain a spectator. The two thieves might settle their quarrels between themselves. I wasn't at all certain to which of them I stood indebted for my extra labor, and concluded to keep my charge of shot for whichever of them survived the fray.

The growls rose to shrieks; the fisher — for such I judged it to be — wriggling his black tail, and the 'coon getting his back still higher. Then came a sudden grab quick as a flash, and a prodigious scuffle. Over and over they rolled, grappling and tearing. Now the gray tail would whisk up in sight, then the black one. The fur flew; and that strong, disagreeable odor sometimes noticed when a cat spits was wafted out to my hiding-place.

It was hard to tell which was the better fighter. Gray fur and black fur seemed to be getting torn out in about equal snatches. Suddenly the 'coon got away from his antagonist, and, running to the foot of a great spruce-

tree standing near, went like a dart up the trunk to the lower limbs. There he faced about.

The fisher followed to the tree, and looked up. He saw his late foe, growled, and then began to climb after him. He was not so good a climber as the 'coon, but scratched his way up with true weasel determination. The moment he came within reach, the raccoon jumped at him, regardless of the height from the ground, and fastened upon his back. The shock caused the fisher to lose his hold; and down both animals dropped with tremendous force, — sufficient to knock the breath out of both of them, I thought. But they clung to each other, and dug and bit with the fury of maniacs.

Presently the 'coon broke away again, and once more ran to the tree, — this time going up its trunk, out of sight, among the branches at the very top. It looked as if he was getting about all the fight he cared to have.

Not so with the big weasel. He instantly followed his antagonist, clumsily but surely clawing his way up the trunk. It took him some time to reach the top; but he got there at last. Another grapple ensued among the very topmost boughs; and they both came tumbling to the ground, catching at the limbs as they fell: but, grappling afresh, they rolled down the steep bank to the edge of the water.

Meanwhile it had grown so dark, that I could but just see their writhing forms. The growling, grappling sound continued, however; and I could hear them splash in the water. Then there came a lull. One or the other had "given in," I felt sure. Which was the victor?

Cocking my gun, I crept to the bank. As nearly as



I could make out the situation, the fisher was holding the 'coon by the throat.

I took a step forward. A twig snapped under my foot. Instantly a pair of fiery eyes glared up at me in the gloom; and, with a harsh snarl, the fisher raised himself. But the 'coon didn't stir: he was dead.

It was almost too bad to shoot the victor of so desperate a fight; but, thinking of my traps, I hardened my heart, and fired. The fisher reared up, fell over, then, recovering its legs, leaped at me with all the ferocity of its blood-thirsty race. But the heavy buck-shot had surely done its work; and, with another attempt to spring at me, the animal fell back dead.

I had no more trouble with my traps.

## NINTH DAY.

Some Melancholy Cries at a Distance. — More Snow. — A Brisk Chase after a Drove of Lynxes. — Two More shot. — A Discovery. — Beaver. — Beaver-Houses under the Snow. — Raed's Air-Castle. — The Doctor's Enthusiasm. — A Fisher. — Wonderful Tenacity of Life. — An Anecdote of the Fisher.

A GAIN aroused in the night, by Wash, to hear some of the most melancholy cries it is possible to imagine. They were at a distance, seemingly on the mountain-side beyond the swamp. We were unable to distinguish more than the *timbre* of the notes, and could hardly have testified whether they were human or bestial. At intervals, indeed, they seemed fearfully to resemble certain *quavers* which some have held to be peculiar to womanhood. Raed suggested that it might be "mother to the Doctor's baby," bewailing the loss of that hapless innocent.

Some prowler was lamenting. Grief and downright broken-heartedness seemed to be finding piteous utterance in the notes of woe, which, minute by minute, came struggling on the still, dark air.

Of course I have no need to inform the reader what

our friend Wash believed it to be; and he argued his opinion from the stories of "old hunters."

It might have been a catamount, possibly; but I fancied it as likely to have been a lynx. It is hardly to be supposed that the panther has a monopoly of plaintive cries.

Such sounds in the night, as I have been before guilty of remarking, gives one strange, lonely sensations.

It was cloudy, and had begun to *spit* snow. I could feel the icy little flakes hit on my hands and face, and hear them rattle inclemently among the frozen twigs. We went back into our blankets for another nap.

It was snowing fast in the morning; and the storm continued till near noon. We did not get out — farther than to fell a thick yellow-birch off eight or ten rods, in the top of which we set two traps for hares — till after eleven. Things had a decidedly wintry look, — the whole landscape immaculately white, the skies dull black.

While eating lunch, we heard a lynx — just a short, sharp screech — off not more than a hundred rods; and, untying Grip, immediately set off to hunt it. The hound was in good condition, and bounded along in an ecstasy of dog-joy. His "flesh-wounds" were all healed up. Even the Doctor "busked himself" smartly.

"Means to retrieve the laurels he lost last night," Wash whispered.

Going out in the direction of the sound, we came upon the trail directly, and not only that of a single lynx, but of five or six, apparently. "A whole drove of 'em!" shouted the Doctor.

They seemed to have gone along on a frolic; all racing and bounding on together, throwing up the light

snow amazingly. Perhaps the screech we had heard had accompanied some playful cuff.

The hound was laid on the multifold trail, and *waded* off, baying lustily. But we could nearly keep up with him; for the crust under the recent snow broke beneath his weight. In ten minutes the hound sighted them, and challenged excitedly. We were a little behind, and did not at once get a glimpse; but we could hear them smashing the twigs with an occasional sharp little *yawl*. Hurrying on with long strides, first Wash, then the rest of us, espied them through the vistas of tree-trunks. Leaping and plunging, on they went, — one, two, three, four, five of them, — their gray backs bobbing up and down. 'Twas immensely exciting. We fairly kept pace with the hound, poor fellow! who went in to his belly, and would have gone deeper, at every spring. On we went, or rather wallowed; and on went the *cats*. It was quite impossible to gain much upon them, and too far to fire, — twenty rods among trees. And soon our *wind* began to fail. The chase crept away from us; but the hound gained a little, we thought. From their habit of leaping, the lynxes had an advantage in so much snow. We had little doubt, though, that they would ultimately take to the trees; and followed on. In so lively a chase, one soon gets over two or three miles. The trail had swerved off to the north-east, and led down among a lofty growth of white-ashes and maples into a broad valley, along the bed of which ran a wild, black stream, which probably flowed into the head of the lake. Here and there, white bridges of ice spanned it; but much of its course was among rocks, where no ice

could form. Contrasted with the white banks, the hoarsely-murmuring waters looked fairly inky. The farther bank rose more abruptly, and gave root to a fine old growth of hemlock two and even three feet in diameter. Cats and hound splashed through the torrent. Grip was now close behind, not more than twenty yards in the rear of the last one. They were now all *yawling*, as we could plainly hear. On a sudden, one of them faced about, and drew up its back, spitting like a fury. Grip rushed at it undauntedly; when it as suddenly whirled about, and *scratched* up a hemlock like a weasel. Two more also took to the neighboring trees. The others ran on, and were soon out of sight up the mountain. Grip howled for us just as we were crossing the brook below on one of the ice-bridges.

All three of the cats were "wauling" at a great rate. It was *music*. Such a din I never heard. The three, together with the hound's baying, did make a most astonishing medley of sound. Wade had the rifle; and, working up the bank in sight of the one that had first taken to tree, he shot it. The creature clung a moment to the limb on which it had been sitting; then dropped *chunk* into the snow, and merely quivered. A good shot.

But, with the report, both the others leaped out of their trees, and bounded silently off. Wash fired one barrel of the shot-gun after one of them, and Grip gave chase. The other went in an opposite direction nearly. The first ran for forty or fifty rods up the hillside; then, finding Grip at his heels, took to a beech. Coming up at length, Wash let drive the second barrel at it but it

jumped out, and ran again, Grip after it. We saw blood on the snow. Some of the shot had struck it. But it went several hundred yards, the hound grabbing at it, and both growling; then it ran up a stooping birch eight or ten feet, and faced about, head down, to the hound. We waited for Wade, who had stopped to reload the rifle. He came up, and shot the creature; but it tore the dog a little upon the nose, and scratched one of his ears open, when he pounced on it.

We were pretty tired, as well as out of breath; and Grip was wet and lolling.

"Best to go after the other?" Wash asked.

We decided to let *him* go, rather than wallow another mile. Assisted by Wade and Wash, I managed to skin the one we had just shot. Raed and the Doctor went back to perform the same "last office" for the first victim. Coming down along with our skin, we found them hard at it; Raed holding the legs with averted nose, and the Doctor cutting away with the *sang-froid* of an army surgeon.

"Preliminary practice," he remarked, looking up for a moment.

The skins off, rolled up and bound with withs, we started down the stream, with the intention of coming out on the lake, and so on down to camp.

Lower down, the banks were even steeper, and crowned with a smart poplar-growth. It was as much as we could do to get along without tumbling into the stream; and, just at one of the most difficult places, a poplar had fallen adown the bank, with its top into the water. We had to climb over it. Wash crawled under.

Climbing a fence with snow-shoes on is a ticklish job. The Doctor tumbled over, and pulled at Raed, who, in turn, caught at Wade: so that, as it happened, all four of them were down into the snow together. And, while there, Wash made a discovery. "By Jude!" said he, "just look at that *track*!" (It should be remarked that Wash has been striving earnestly to give up his habitual "By Jude!" and has pretty nearly succeeded. Only great surprises catch him.) We looked. It was a queer track. Not like a goose's exactly. It had five toes; but they were webbed.

"It's some sort of large water-fowl," the Doctor pronounced.

"But here are fresh poplar-chips," observed Raed, picking up a handful. "And see there — up by the root of this poplar! Why, fellows, this tree's been lately fallen — by something! Gnawed off! And look at the top! — half the branches gone, and lots of the bark off the rest!"

"Beavers!" cried Wash.

"Suppose it is?" Raed inquired.

It was like what we had heard of beavers.

Below the point where the poplar-top lay in the water the stream was deeper and more sluggish; but the water continued open for some rods farther on, till the brook entered a sort of small pond, which was, of course, frozen over.

"If it's beaver, there'll be houses somewhere round here," said Wash. "Like as not, this little pond is made by one of their famous dams."

We hurried on, and, coming where the ice was firm,

went out on it. The pond covered, perhaps, three acres; and, down near the lower end, we espied several little mound-like hummocks bulging up in the snow. "Bet ye those are the huts!" offered the Doctor.

We presumed they were, and made directly for them. But, even on near approach, it was not easy determining: for the snow buried them to the depth of several feet; and it was not easy digging through so thick a stratum, with only the butts of our guns for spades. Their position in the pond, however, as also the marked semblance of a dam at the foot of it, supported our conclusion. The mounds rose about four feet above the surrounding snow, and were as large as an old-fashioned potash-kettle, a haycock, or (by Wash's comparison) the shell of the *restored* glyptodon in the Natural-history Rooms. A lynx had been out to one of these, and dug in through the snow near the base of the mound. Quite a quantity of dirt had been scratched out, some sticks, and an old knot, water-worn.

"Beaver inside, ye see. Lynx smelled them; tried to dig them out," was the way Wash explained it; and it seemed likely enough.

"We must trap these fellows," said Wade. "But I didn't suppose they worked on their huts and dams at this season of the year. Thought they were denned up in the winter."

Wash remarked, that it was probably food they were out after.

"What! do they eat poplar-wood?" exclaimed Wade, laughing.

"Not poplar-wood exactly, but poplar-bark," said



Wash. "That's what they felled that tree for. They gnaw off the branches, and take them down under the ice to their houses here. We might set traps up there."

"I saw a lynx-track up there near the poplar," remarked Raed; "a lot of footprints near together, as if the creature had stolen up slowly. Do you suppose the lynxes catch them?"

I had no doubt they did occasionally; for some years ago, while up in the "wild lands" of this State (Maine), I was a chance witness of a curious attack made by a lynx upon a beaver-house.

About seven miles from the foot of the Allaquash Lake, there was a beaver-colony on a large brook known thereabouts as "Bear Brook" (there are probably a score of Bear Brooks in the State). I had stumbled upon it one day while hunting marten. It was just above a bend in the stream at the lower end of a meadow, or wooded flat. There was a strong dam of mud, old knots and branches, many of which showed the marks of the beavers' teeth. It had seemingly been quite recently repaired; and, in one place, the water fell over it in a foamy sheet.

The dam flowed the brook back, forming a pond of perhaps an acre in extent; and in the pond above the dam there were two mud-huts, rising some five feet out of the water.

It is only on these secluded streams and in small colonies that the beaver are now found in this State. Formerly every brook and river had their settlements,--sometimes a score of families, of from four to ten in a family.

Knowing that beaver keep in their houses mostly by day, I was not surprised to find all quiet on the afternoon I first discovered them.

But the thought occurred to me, that, by coming up by moonlight, I might shoot one, perhaps two, with my double-barrelled gun, while they were out after food or swimming in the pond.

I said nothing to the other fellows; for a long series of experiences had taught me that one *alone* is far more likely to be successful on such an expedition than a party.

So, a few nights after, just as dusk was settling over the lake and the forest, I stepped quietly out, and, taking my gun from the hollow trunk of a great maple where I kept it, started on my evening ramble.

For the first mile or two the woods were wonderfully still; scarcely a sound save that of my own feet breaking up the dead brush. Here and there, a hare, disturbed in its form, leaped away; or a partridge, roosting on some low branch, whirred blindly off among the thick trunks; and once a caribou sprang up from its couch at the foot of a birch, with deep-drawn breath as it bounded away.

Presently the moon looked over the high eastward ridges, lighting up the sky, and silvering all the dusky tops of the spruces. The elfish rays seemed to be a signal of awakening. Immediately the forest, hitherto so quiet, became vocal. The various prowlers of the wilderness began their cries. Bears coming from their dens were uttering their mournful challenge; wildcats and 'coons were calling to each other; and owls began their dismal hoots.

There is really but very little danger in the open forest from either bear or wildcat. The hunter has but one cause of fear, — the pouncing-down, from some tree-top, of the dreaded catamount; and these creatures are now so rare in Maine, that the chance of thus meeting them is small indeed.

The gurgle and plunge of the brook over the dam announced my approach to the beaver-settlement. Making a little circuit, I worked my way from tree to tree down toward the shore of their pond. Gaining a point where I could look out upon the water, I stopped to listen. A faint paddling caught my ear. Several black heads were moving about in the water; and I presently espied a beaver perched on the top of one of the mud-huts. Soon another scrambled up the side, and began to "box" and play with the first. They were both within easy range. It was too good an opportunity to be lost. I fired with first one, then the other, of the barrels, and knocked them both off into the water.

Dropping my gun, I pulled down a long, dry sapling, and, by wading into the pond, managed to draw both the carcasses in to the shore. They would have weighed, I judge, fifty pounds apiece. I lighted a roll of bark I brought for a torch, got out my knife, and took off their skins.

The reports had, of course, alarmed the others. They had hidden themselves; and, after watching a while, I went back to the camp.

The next night was wet and foggy; but the following day was clear. Knowing that the moon would not rise till late, I decided to go up before nightfall, and watch

for the beaver to come out at dusk. Sunset found me coseyly ensconced in a clump of alders a few rods back from the pond — on the lookout. Half an hour passed: dusk was falling; but as yet there had been no sign of life about the beaver-settlement. I began to fear that my previous raid had frightened them away.

Suddenly a sly step on the dried spruce foliage behind took my attention. I looked around, and saw, through the alder-leaves, a mottled gray animal coming down toward the pond, past my hiding-place. A glance at the large, round head with its tasselled ears, and the short tail, told me that it was a lynx. He had not espied me. At first, I supposed he was after water; and was somewhat surprised to see him steal cautiously along to the foot of a large white-pine that leaned out over the little pond, and, after looking around, run up the trunk to a large limb that projected out over the water.

Along this the beast crept for ten or fifteen feet to where the smaller boughs from the sides of it offered a wider surface of support. Here it crouched, and lay motionless, with its head on one side of the bough, looking down.

It then occurred to me, that, like myself, he had probably come to hunt beaver, and that this was his way of doing it.

I could easily have shot him from where I lay; but, reflecting that by so doing I should scare the beaver, I concluded to be a partner with him. Indeed, I had begun to feel no little curiosity to see how he would manage it.

Meanwhile it was getting dark fast in the woods, though the twilight still shone in on the little pond.

Presently a black head bobbed up into the faintly-glowing surface with a slight splash, and began swimming, throwing the water into glancing ripples. Then another and another came up, till seven or eight were moving about at once. I kept my eye on them and on the lynx alternately. A beaver soon climbed upon one of the houses on the farther side of the pond; and, ere long, another had scrambled on the house nearest the dam.

I then noticed more particularly that the limb on which the lynx was lying was pretty nearly over the house nearest the bank on which I was concealed, and that he was probably waiting for some of them to get upon it.

Nor was I mistaken; for, in the course of five or ten minutes, two of the beavers, as in a frolic or a chase, ran up the side, and wrestled with their paws, one trying to push the other off. Instantly the lynx dropped upon them with a pounce and a growl.

It was too dark to get a good view of the struggle. There was a noise of grappling, growling, and the peculiar grunt of the beaver; then all three of them rolled off into the water together with a great splashing. Instead of diving to hide, the other beavers came crowding up, swimming with their heads and shoulders well out of the water: clearly they were coming to the rescue. In falling from the hut, the combatants had gone down behind it. From where I was crouching, I could not see their tactics in the water: but, judging

from the spattering and growlings, they had a pretty smart "set-to," in which the lynx was over-matched; for he sprang out, and climbed dripping to the top of the hut.

The noise of the fight had roused all the beavers of the colony. They came swarming about, surrounding the hut on which the lynx sat, on all sides. It was difficult counting them in the fast-fading light; but I thought there must have been fifteen or twenty of them.

I could distinguish, besides the gruff, grunting noise, a chattering of teeth as they menaced their enemy. The lynx seemed, from his movements, in no wise desirous of encountering them again in the water; and it was too far to leap to the bank. The beavers, too, seemed to understand their advantage: they were blockading him most determinedly.

Some minutes passed. So interested had I become in the combat, that I nearly forgot the object of my coming. It seemed too bad to fire upon the beavers, who were so valiantly defending their homes against a fierce, and, to them, a very terrible foe.

I took as good aim as the darkness permitted at the lynx, and fired both barrels. The creature leaped off the hut. There was a great plunging and splashing.

Hastily loading one barrel, I ran to the bank; but all was now quiet save the lap of the ripples raised by the splashes, and there was nothing to be seen of either lynx or beavers.

I then lighted my roll of bark, and, putting it on a pole, held it out over the water. Neither trace nor

vestige of the late combatants was to be discerned. The beavers had dived: and the lynx had sunk or escaped; most likely the latter.

I give this little story for what it is worth, hoping it may correct what I deem a rather erroneous opinion of many naturalists, — that the beaver has no means of defence save in flight.

Going down the lake (for the brook made in at about a quarter of a mile below), we had dinner, and decided to carry up traps for the beaver. Raed had an idea that a beaver-pelt was worth twenty dollars. He had somewhere read that they brought a dollar an ounce. But this price must have been quoted in days before the silk hat came in vogue, — days when grand old beaver “tiles” graced the dandy brows of the gentry. They don’t bring such prices now; never will again. A beaver-skin is now worth from two to five dollars. But we were none of us certain as to the price, and rather encouraged Raed in figuring up the net profit at a hundred and fifty dollars on seven or eight beaver *which we were going to catch*. This set the Doctor high-cockalorum at once. “Why!” he exclaimed, “that’s the total of *fees* for cutting off *three legs*; and it isn’t often a young surgeon gets a *leg* to saw off.”

So bright was the prospect, that he offered to go to the swamp to take up one of the traps set there (for we concluded that the two set in the birch-top for hares would not be enough), and started off on the moment without gun or any thing — but his hat.

Meanwhile we took up the two from the birch-brush,

one of which held a hare. Wash also shot a second hare, that was budding nonchalantly beside its distressed companion in the trap. Indeed, it is a creature not overburdened with "mother wit." The Doctor came hurriedly back to us.

"Game, boys!—game!" he shouted. "In the very first trap! A black, ugly-looking brute as ever I set eyes on!"

Wade went after the rifle. Then we all started for the swamp.

"I hadn't the gun, ye see," the Doctor explained to us. "I did break a club to knock it on the head; but it bristled up and showed its teeth so, that I'll be *dosed* if I cared to go very near."

On coming up, lo! there was a fisher hard and fast by one fore-foot!—about the wickedest-looking fellow I ever saw. He had dragged the trap with both clogs nearly a hundred yards; and would doubtless have gone farther, had not one of them caught between a great bass and a fir-shrub. Finding himself fast, he had gnawed and bitten the trap till it *shone* all over from the scratches made by his teeth. He had gnawed the clogs too, covering the snow with chips; and gnawed and torn the bark all off the bass, on one side, up as far as he could reach. We did not so much wonder that the Doctor didn't like the looks of it.

The boys walked round it at a respectful distance, for some minutes, to observe its motions. We had some difficulty in keeping Grip back: he had inadvertently followed us out. The fisher kept facing about to the hound, making a curious gruff, snuffling noise, and dart-



ing out its nose menacingly. It was a very compactly-built creature. Its body was nearly as long as an otter's; its legs were short, but very thick and muscular; and its black claws looked nearly or quite as formidable as those of a lynx. Wade at length fired the rifle at its head. The bullet struck an inch above its eyes, and it dropped. Grip sprang upon it, and shook the carcass to his heart's content. As we were intending to take up the trap, we threw off the clogs; and Wash and I took hold of the chain to drag it in the trap up to camp. We had gone twenty or thirty rods, when a sudden cessation of draft made us look round. There stood the fisher on its feet, making a rather dizzy attempt to jump at us. We let go the chain in a hurry, and put a few yards of discretion between us and the suddenly-resurrected animal with commendable despatch. Our exclamations caused the others, who were a little in advance, to turn quickly.

"What, come to life again!" Wade exclaimed in great astonishment.

It looked like it.

"Well, if a ball in the head isn't sufficient, I'll see what one through the heart will do;" saying which, Wade fired a second bullet into the animal's breast. The blood flew. The shock knocked the beast over; but it immediately regained its feet, and stood *wheezing* for breath. "Strangely tenacious of life!" cried the Doctor.

Tenacious indeed; and a gory, piteous spectacle to boot. I got a heavy bludgeon of dry sapling, and knocked it on the head repeatedly, till it seemed as if

its cranium must be effectually broken. I saw, however, that the rifle-bullet had but glanced from its hard, firm skull. After this *second killing*, we started on again; but, almost incredible as it may seem, before we got to camp the beast again got partially on its legs. It really seemed to possess a life independent of its body. This time we got the axe, and cut its head sheer off; and were almost surprised to observe *that it did not come to life again*.

The adventure with the fisher had consumed so much of the afternoon, that we were obliged to forego setting the beaver-traps till the next day.

The skin came off very hard. We were over an hour, even with the Doctor's *professional* assistance, getting it "peeled." Either the incident, or the *odor* (peculiar to the weasel family) which the animal emitted, recalled a rather doughty adventure with one of these same creatures, in which, as a boy, the writer had a hand ten years ago.

It was in October, — one of those magic months for hunters which contain the letter *r*. During every month spelled with an "r," fur is good; that is, salable. Fur can, therefore, be "taken off" from September to May. This is the rule old hunters go by.

Jud Edwards and his brother Tom (boy-friends of the writer) had got a line of mink-traps set over on Roaring Brook, which here comes tumbling down over the rocks from the North Pond behind the mountain of which it is the outlet. I wasn't exactly a member of Tom and Jud's firm; but I used to go up with them sometimes, and had an interest in the business. Perhaps I was what merchants would call a "silent partner."

The brook was full of trout; and the mountain-mink love to fish in its clear, dark pools.

They had set a line of figure-four traps for two miles along the bank, and used to visit them once in two or three days.

The traps had been set about a fortnight, and three mink had been taken; when Jud, whose turn it had been to go "the rounds," came running down one morning, while we were at breakfast, in great excitement.

"Somebody's torn up all our traps!" cried he.

"Torn up the traps!" exclaimed Tom.

"Yes, every one of them, and thrown the poles and stakes all round!"

"Why! Who did it, s'pose?"

"Don't know. The Andros boy, perhaps. He meant to trap there, you know."

"Oh! I don't believe 'twas Skip Andros," said Tom.

"He ain't mean enough for that."

"Well, I don't know. There 'tis! Somebody did it. Going to set 'em over again?"

"Of course!" said Tom. "We won't give up for this."

And, after breakfast, we all went over to the brook. Every trap was broken up, as Jud had reported. Somebody had made clean work with us. One thing puzzled us a little, though: our "drag," which we had left at the upper end of the line, was torn all to pieces, as if something had tried to *eat* it.

"Whoever did it must have had a dog with him," said Tom.

"Mean sneak!" cried Jud. "I'd like to catch him at it!"

We went to work, and, by eleven o'clock, had set them all up again; and it was decided to visit them as soon as the next morning again.

It was Tom's turn; and he was up and off before breakfast, but, in course of an hour, came back *fuming*.

"All smashed up again!" he cried, — "just as 'twas yesterday morning! But I don't think it was a *feller* that did it: for there had been a mink in one of the traps when it was torn up; and *they* tore *that* all to pieces too, and scattered bits of fur all about! Perhaps they did that to fool us, though."

Jud was discouraged.

"No use to set them again," said he.

But sturdy Tom wouldn't give it up; and we went over and fell to work once more, and, by noon, had them in running order again.

"We shall find them flat by morning," said Jud as we went back along.

"Some of us must watch," said Tom. "Father won't spare me this afternoon. Can't you go over and watch them, Jud?"

Jud had the same excuse. But they both thought I *would do*; and so the watching fell to me, — rather a lonely, and possibly dangerous, job. After dinner, however, I loaded the old gun, sharpened my jack-knife, and got ready for a war.

"Of course you won't fire at a *feller* or a man if it should happen to be one," Tom instructed; "but if it's a bear, or any other creature, take good aim, and *bring* him if you can."

"Don't fire unless you see something," said Jud; "and we'll come up as soon as we hear the gun."

And, with this understanding, I set off. It was considerably over a mile to the brook, and, all the way, through woods and over pasture-lands.

About midway of our line of traps the stream ran through a shrubbery opening, in which, some five or six rods from the bank, there stood a clump of low hemlocks. Among these I secreted myself. I thus had three of the traps in sight. They were on the opposite bank of the stream from my hiding-place, and all within range of the old "queen's arm," I calculated. It was rather lonesome business; but the afternoon wore away.

There had been a frost, and the whole forest had come out in its autumn finery. Crows and jays were mustering for their trip southward. 'Twas a noisy, gaudy scene; but nothing came near the traps.

About three o'clock it came in cloudy; and, by four, it had become lowery and dark. I had got dreadfully sick of the job, and was almost starting out for home; when suddenly the brush crackled in the woods below; and, a few moments later, a largish black creature came out into the opening, and, putting up its muzzle, began to snuffle, and look stealthily around. My first glance showed me that it was no dog, and that I need not expect any *man* behind it; but I kept quiet. It was still some twenty or twenty-five rods off. After watching a while, it moved on up the brook toward the lower end of the traps. It couldn't be a bear, either; for its motions were cat-like; and its body, though long, was slim and lithe; while its legs were short. Following the trail made by the "drag," and coming to the lowest of the traps, it thrust in its paws between the poles of

the "spring," pulled them apart, and ate the bait; then, after smelling round a little, started on to the next one, which was nearest to me. Now was my time. I cocked the gun; but the animal heard the click, and stopped, with a suspicious glance at the hemlocks. I pulled the trigger, got an awful kick, and, for a second or two, couldn't see any thing for smoke, but, scrambling up out of the hemlock, perceived the creature bounding away on the other side of the stream.

On the upper edge of the clearing, near the foot of the mountain, was a ledge, or cairn, of large rocks; and among these the *robber* disappeared, crawling into a great crevice. I had no wish to beard him in his den alone; and so, going up within seven or eight rods, halted, and began loading, and firing at the hole to keep him in. I had him in a state of siege, and kept the shot rattling round his door; devoutly hoping, though, that he wouldn't make a *sortie*.

In course of half an hour I heard voices, and saw the boys come panting into the opening, — Tom, Jud, and another, who turned out to be Sam Wheeler, a cousin of theirs, who had come during the afternoon. Now, Sam was a first-rate chap, and a good scholar at books, yet one of a class of boys you often meet, — a fellow brimful of great projects, often not very practicable ones. But he was always ready to undertake them himself, and hadn't a drop of coward blood in him; in short, had "more zeal than wisdom."

They came running up. Sam had brought the pitchfork, and Jud had an axe. I hurriedly explained what I had seen and done; and we made up to the ledge. The

creature, whatever it was, had crept far down under one of the large rocks. We could hear him snarl; but it sounded in a good ways; and we couldn't see any thing of him from the mouth of the den.

How to get at the beast was the question.

"Tell you what," said Sam: "we must do as old Gen. Putnam did. You've all read how he went down into the old she-wolf's den with a rope tied to his leg, and shot her by the light of her own glaring eyes?"

Yes, we had heard of that; but —

"Who's afraid?" exclaimed Sam.

Nobody, of course, was afraid: still —

"I'll go down!" cried he. "Load the gun!"

"But we hain't got any rope," said Tom, "to tie on your leg."

"Might take his comforter," suggested Jud.

It was a new and very long one.

"Just the thing!" said Sam.

And we soon had it securely knotted round his ankle.

"Now," said Sam, taking the gun, and preparing to descend, "when I kick the comforter, you must pull me out. That's what old Put told 'em."

Jud and I took the other end of it, and prepared to pull when signalled. Thus arranged, Sam thrust in the gun, and crawled bravely into the crevice. Tom, meanwhile, took the pitchfork, and stood ready for emergencies. Sam slowly wriggled in. It took some time for his boots to get fairly out of sight. But he squirmed on manfully; and we had payed out nearly all of the comforter, when there occurred a sudden halt, a bump, and a deafening explosion, followed by yawls and

smothered shouts from Sam, and a most spasmodic kicking. We pulled and yanked away as per agreement. He *wouldn't come*: but, after a most tremendous *yerk*, something suddenly gave way; and out came the comforter, with one of his boots.

The uproar inside redoubled: volumes of stifling smoke, bearing a horrible odor of burnt hair, gushed out; midst which there leaped forth, not Sam, — who ought to have come out first, — but the cat, spitting and snapping, and, rushing headlong, knocked Jud sprawling. I jumped away for dear life. But Tom, who had the fork, gave him a thrust which took his attention: and, looking back, I beheld a pitched battle going on between Tom and the beast; Tom backing off and prodding wildly with the fork, and the animal jumping wildly at him.

Meanwhile Jud regained his legs, and, seizing the axe, ran in from behind, and dealt the creature a blow on the head, which laid him out, — stunned; in which condition he speedily got wounds enough from fork and axe to have killed a whole menagerie.

In the frenzy of the tussle we quite forgot Sam, but, hearing a scraping sound, turned to see him just emerging from the crevice, headforemost this time, but in wretched plight. His jacket and pants were terribly lacerated, his hair full of dirt, and boot gone. We stared at him.

“Halloo, Sam! — thought you was a *goner*!” exclaimed Tom.

“Thunderation!” ejaculated Sam. “Why didn’t you pull a feller’s leg off, and done with it!”



"Here's your boot, Sam. Did he scratch ye?" (pacifically.)

"Scratch me! Look at my jacket! He went over me like a streak o' lightning!"

"Why didn't you shoot him, Sam?"

"Didn't see him till he rushed. Didn't have time to take aim."

"Didn't his eyes give light enough, Sam?"

"You go to thunder, the whole of ye!"

And, whenever we used to want to stir Sam up a little, we would ask him what he thought of old Put and the she-wolf.

## TENTH DAY.

Setting Traps for Beaver. — “Busting” a Beaver-Hut. — “Decidedly Hard-shelled.” — Mining the Walls. — The Inside. — The Doctor comes in from the Swamp Panic-stricken. — A Strange Recital. — Trap carried off by a Catamount. — Terrific Shrieks. — We sally out. — Ugly Fancies. — A Scare. — A Moment of Suspense. — A Revelation.

**E**ARLY next morning we set off to put down the traps for the beaver. The sun was just rising as we went up the lake. A fine, sharp January morning; every thing brisk and crisp. Two rose-colored peaks showing over the forest to the north-west drew repeated exclamations of admiration from the boys.

We went in through the spruces quite cautiously, in the hope of espying some of the beaver about the poplar they had felled. But all was quiet. Perhaps they had heard us, and retired; for the beaver is more shy than the fox even. More probably they did not come out by day at all. Hunters tell me that it is rare that a beaver is surprised at work in the day-time. Night is their time for labor. There were fresh chips about the poplar. More branches had been gnawed off. There were also fresh tracks; and a plunging trail

showed where a lynx had made a rush down the side of the high bank upon them; but there were no signs to indicate that his incursion had been crowned with a capture. There was good opportunity for the beaver to dive off into water four and six feet deep.

Several branches, gnawed up into fagots three and four feet long, were floating, partially frozen, into "anchor-ice." It looked as if they took these green limbs down under the ice of the pond to their huts. Beaver ordinarily store up wood enough during the fall to last them through the winter. This wood they lay along the bottom of their pond near their huts; piling on mud, with small stones sufficient to hold it down. But occasionally they get short, and have to turn out even in January. In localities, too, like the one above referred to, where the water does not wholly freeze over, they are said to be less diligent in gathering their winter-store; aware, probably, that they will be able to come out at will.

We set the three traps under water, a little below the place where they had come up into the poplar top, chaining them fast to the larger branches. This done, we went down to the huts. Wash was very anxious to "see how they looked inside." He had brought along the pine shovel and the axe; and, at the risk of frightening the animals from their retreat, we undertook to break into one of the houses.

Raed cleared off the snow, — something of a job; for there were over two feet of it. Then there stood revealed the snowy turf top of the hut, bristling with short bits of stick and crumbling muck-lumps; and,

clearing away the snow from the sides, a round structure, about four five high by perhaps six in diameter, was before us. Wash took up the axe. "Be ready now with your guns to shoot when I knock it open," he advised, delivering a full blow against the side.

He might as well have struck a rock. The back of the axe rebounded from the hard frozen mass. But almost instantly we heard a splash down into the water, inside, followed immediately by another and another, — a very peculiar, muffled *slap-dash, slap-dash*. We presumed it to be the beaver, frightened by the blow.

Wash gave a second stroke, and a third, to no apparent effect.

"Pretty hard-shelled affair," remarked the Doctor.

"Need a crowbar," Raed observed.

Wash and I went off to the shore and cut a small rock-maple sapling for a "pry." This was sharpened at one end; and for more than half an hour we *jabbed* with it, and beat with the "eye" of the axe, trying to break a hole in the hut-wall, to small purpose. The firmly-compacted mass of mud and fagots, now ten times more tenacious from frost, resisted our best strokes. We chipped, and wore holes into it four and six inches deep; but still the wall showed no signs of yielding or cracking. No wonder the lynx had given it up.

Frozen earth is almost as hard as granite, and, worse still, has no plane of clearage.

"Nothing but gunpowder'll start it," was the Doctor's opinion.

We had not enough powder with us, and so went

back to camp, and put the matter over till afternoon ; for Wash was determined to break in, now that he had undertaken it.

Accordingly, after dinner, we took a fresh flaskful of powder, and set off again. The Doctor, however, preferred to "keep house," and read "White Lies:" so we left him behind. But he promised to go out to the swamp during the afternoon, and look to the traps there. For that purpose we left him the shot-gun.

How to use powder on the stubborn mud-mound was not directly perceptible. Raed procured a dry hemlock limb which had fallen during some of the late storms, and, cutting out a piece about a foot in length, sharpened it in form of a drill. With this, after repeated re-sharpenings, a hole was *punched* slantwise into the wall to the depth of nine or ten inches. Into this hole we proposed to introduce our powder. But a difficulty arose: we had no fuze. Various propositions were discussed to supply this lack. At length Wade went off to the high bank at the upper end of the pond, and cut a sumac-bush. From a section of one of the stalks he punched out the pith, leaving a hole the size of a small pipe-stem. This tube he proposed to fill with powder, and use as fuze. The powder—about a quarter of a pound of it—was then wrapped in a bit of newspaper, and thrust down to the bottom of the hole. The sumac tube was next run down, and driven through into the powder. The hole was then "tamped" with bits of frozen earth, and small stones driven in hard with a plug and the axe. Powder was afterwards poured into the hole in the tube, and the blast declared ready. Nobody

cared to touch it off, however, in its present state: the explosion bade fair to follow incontinently close upon the heels of the *touching*. Wash amended this imperfection by laying a train of paper up the side of the wall. It was then fired, and we ran off a few rods.

A dull *tunk* shook the ice; and a lump of the frozen wall rose fifty or sixty feet, and fell back heavily into the snow. We ran up. The blast had blown out a piece as large as a peck-measure only; but it had rent open a small cranny leading down into a black cavity within. This cavity was the upper chamber of the house; but we were surprised at the thickness and strength of the wall, — fourteen to fifteen inches, Raed declared, after applying his pocket-rule. Wash then thrust in the lever, and tried to wrench the sides apart: we all lent our strength to it, but only succeeded in breaking the lever.

“What we need is a big pry,” exclaimed Wade, — “a fifteen-foot one.”

A stout white-birch was felled, trimmed up, and dragged along; and with this formidable representative of the mechanical powers, wielded by our united strength, the hut was at length “bust.” But our tiresome experience suggests a bit of advice to sportsmen: Never think to break into a beaver-house in the winter with less than pick and crowbar. In January, at least, they are, to use the Doctor’s phrase, decidedly “hard-shelled.”

We had opened a large hole into the upper apartment of the hut, which was about the size and shape of a ten-pail kettle turned bottom up. This was a dry

chamber, and contained, when gathered up, quite a large wisp of dried grass. There were also a number of poplar-sticks, bare of bark. In the floor was a hole, nearly a foot in diameter, communicating with the room below. The water came up to the floor: we could see it through the hole. Wash ran down the broken lever. There was a sudden movement, as if a beaver had gone out: possibly one or more of them had remained in the lower apartment. The lever went down freely into the hole, indicating about four feet of water in the room below. The floor separating the two rooms was of sticks and mud, like the walls. On first breaking it open, the chamber had a very strong odor, a sort of conglomeration of smells, — *castoreum*, and certain others not so rare.\*

It was dusk before we got back to camp. "White Lies" lay on the hemlock-boughs; but the Doctor was gone. We presumed he had read till late; then gone off to the swamp in a hurry, to look to the traps, as he had promised. The boys were not a little incensed at him for not having supper ready. Worse still, the *wretch* had actually let the fire go out, — a most uncondonable offence. Wood had to be cut; and it was quite dark before the meat and coffee could be got under way.

"Where s'pose the Doctor's betaken himself?" Wade at length questioned.

"Don't know, don't care," snapped Wash; but he had just singed his finger with a brand.

Ten minutes more passed. I wondered a little that

\* See Field Notes on Beaver.

he did not come. If I rightly estimated the Doctor's intellect, he was not a man to stay alone in that swamp long after dark.

A few minutes later, we heard the creak and *crump* of rackets; and our now illustrious fellow-sportsman came hurriedly up, but with the appearance of a man struggling to be calm. He had a couple of pond-trout on a crotched twig; but he threw them down without allusion to the fact that he had been fishing. Something more weighty was on his mind.

"What luck, Doctor?" I asked.

"Boys," he began in a tone out of which all accent of excitement was guardedly expressed, — "boys, you won't care to have me fetch another big *wonderment* from that swamp" (with a gesture swampward). "I sold myself too cheap out there only the other day to care about doing the same thing over again right away."

"What is it, Doctor?" we all exclaimed.

"Trap gone," remarked the Doctor, with the air of an unwilling witness determined not to commit himself.

"Got the clogs off?" I said.

"Clogs and all," replied the Doctor briefly.

"Gone, clogs and all!" Wash exclaimed. "Well, I suppose it hasn't gone far."

"Followed it as much as a quarter of a mile myself," remarked the Doctor, with the easy confidence of a man who knows he has in hand a good thing which will speak for itself.

I began to feel considerably interested, and asked him what the trail looked like.

"That's just it!" said he, giving his leg a little confi-



dential slap. "A very heavy trail. Went off on the leap. Took ten and eleven feet at a jump, — clogs, trap, and all!"

"That so?" demanded Wash.

"Certainly so," replied the Doctor coolly. "All the appearance of being a large animal. And that's not all."

We stared our expectation of his going on; and, after a rather exasperating pause, he resumed: "Yes, boys, I followed it all of a quarter of a mile; and I should have gone farther but for what I heard."

"Did you hear it?" cried Wash.

"I heard a most infernal shriek, not ten rods ahead, — such as I never have heard from these lucivees!" said the Doctor with a burst of vehemence till then repressed.

"A catamount!" exclaimed Wash. "Well you didn't go any farther."

"I thought I wouldn't close in on him," explained the Doctor. "'Twas getting sort of dusky, you know."

"Did you hear it more than once?" said I.

"Yes: heard it two or three times while I was coming back to camp," with a forced laugh to conceal an involuntary shudder. "It seemed to come from up in a tree. I think the animal has climbed into a tree-top, — trap and all."

"Think it's there now?" Raed asked.

"Sound seemed to come from that very same place the last time I heard it," responded the Doctor.

This was exciting talk for a rather dark evening.

"Best to go out there, to the swamp?" Raed asked.

And, but for some lingering suspicion that the Doctor had drawn (unintentionally) on his imagination a little, I doubt whether we should have mustered the courage to leave our fire.

"Five of us, well armed," observed Wade. "Seems to me we ought to be a match even for a catamount."

We ate the steak from the spider, and swallowed a mince-pie abstractedly, thinking over the Doctor's story.

"There!" exclaimed Wash: "hear that? I do believe that was it!"

But the rest of us had not heard any thing; and Wade laughed.

"Boys," said Raed, "I move we go out there and investigate."

"Just what I was going to propose!" cried the Doctor. "After treeing the game, I'm not one to fear *bagging* it."

The shot-gun was unloaded. Wash sprang up to put a charge in it.

"Cram in a good dose of buck-shot, and a rifle-bullet top of 'em, in both barrels," advised Wade, looking to the priming of the rifle.

"Best to take Grip?" I queried.

"By all means!" said Wash, who didn't care to leave any fighting strength behind.

The hound was let loose. Rackets were hastily but firmly bound on. Wade kept the rifle; Wash carried the shot-gun; Raed took the stout "horn-beam" poker we used to tend the fire; I secured the axe; and we armed the Doctor with a formidable maple bludgeon.

Thus equipped, we sallied forth, and went off to the

swamp on the Doctor's trail, but following it with considerable difficulty; for it had grown pretty dark. Grip came on after us: Wade kept him behind. It was a decidedly lonely, and possibly hazardous, expedition. I remember that we spoke in whispers, and peered cautiously ahead.

In places where the spruces were thick it was especially gloomy and dark. But we heard not a sound till just as we were on the borders of the swamp where the cedar began; when a very discordant screech broke upon the stillness, startling us all from its suddenness.

"*Ah-r-r!* — there he is!" cried the Doctor, his teeth almost chattering.

We stopped to listen; and, a minute later, the noise was repeated twice,— a strangely harsh, peculiar scream. It made us shudder involuntarily. Yet it seemed to me that there was something not utterly unfamiliar in the intonation: still I had no idea what it was, unless it was a panther. Grip started to howl; but Wade cut him short with a kick. The cry was at a considerable distance; and, after the first start, we felt relieved: for *now* we knew, pretty near at least, where the creature was; and, to keep our courage up, we pushed on as fast as we could for some minutes.

"We're getting pretty well on to where I first heard him," admonished the Doctor. And, a few moments after that, the screeching began afresh, — not more than two hundred yards away, apparently. It was a doleful, it was a hideous cry. Quite a summoning of valor was necessary to go nearer. But fear of future ridicule

from each other kept us "up to the scratch." But if there were not five hearts drumming away at a most unconscionable rate, then there never were!

With eyes strained to the utmost extent, we moved forward with slow, long steps, — one, two, three, a dozen rods, — expecting every moment to see the creature rise up from the snow, or hear it screech from the tree-tops over our heads. Presently we did hear it only a short distance ahead, — a series of the most appalling shrieks. Evidently they issued from some lofty tree-tops, which we could make out looming indistinctly against the dull sky; one a tall, dark hemlock. I heard Wade and Wash cocking the guns. We had got within five or six rods of the butts of the trees. A curious noise, as of a man clapping his gloved hands, arrested us.

"I do believe *he's* coming down!" whispered Raed. "Look sharp!"

We were all looking sharp as we could; but so dark was the night, that we could make out nothing save the dense shadow of the great hemlock-top. Soon, however, Wash muttered that he could see its eyes, — up toward the top of the tree; and then I even fancied that I could discern two pale bright spots. No pen can tell what suspense and excitement were compressed in those few seconds.

"Be ready, Wade, with your rifle! Be ready, boys, all of ye, to hit hard! Now, for Heaven's sake, Wade, don't miss him, if he springs!" Wash muttered. "I'm going to fire one barrel!"

He rested it against the trunk of a near tree. We

all took a step back, and stood grasping our weapons. A streak of flame, dazzlingly bright from the darkness, flashed off. The report sounded prodigiously loud, I thought. It was followed instantly by a loud flapping noise. Indistinctly I caught sight of something black passing off against the tree-tops and sky, and heard at the same moment a soft thud into the snow at the root of the trees; then a low sound as of something jumping about. We stood ready, every muscle tense. Grip dashed past us, and, despite Wade's recall, ran up. We heard him snuff. Then he came running back with something in his mouth. Raed struck a match, and I lighted a pitch-pine splint (I had taken several of these in my pocket).

It was an *owl*!

Such a roar of hysterical laughter as shook the air — the swamp, I came near saying — will not be heard there again, I will be bound. The bird was nearly as large as a goose, — one of the veritable “screech-owls,” so far as vocal accomplishments went; though its feathery tufts led us to rank it as a “horned owl” (*Bubo Virginianus*).

From the glimpse I had obtained, we concluded that there had been two of them in the tree, discussing some line of *bubal* policy, or possibly making love, when the Doctor, coming along on his cat-trail, had mistaken their domestic discourse for the shrieks of a catamount. But we had all been completely “sold,” and could not well deride him.

After searching about a while, we found the trail of

the animal that had dragged off the trap. It led past the trees where the owls had sat; but as there was small prospect of being able to come up with it, to say nothing of our disinclination for so doughty an enterprise, we went back to camp — with our owl.

## ELEVENTH DAY.

A Regular North-easter. — Building a Fire in the Storm. — A Young Lynx, which turns out to be a Noisy Pet.

**D**URING the latter part of the night it came on to snow, with the wind north-east.

Morning disclosed a wintry scene, — air full of snow fine as meal, and driven sharply by a steady, cutting blast; weather so thick, one could not see half way across the lake; and the whole vast forest whitening stormily. Fire out entirely; ashes and coals wet. Worse still, the wood was out; and another stub had to be felled in the storm.

To build a fire in the storm was clearly out of the question: so a mass of evergreen was cut, and a sort of shed raised on the windward side, partially sheltering the blaze.

More evergreen was also dragged along, and piled about the doorway of the camp; for the snow drove in a little: all of which was not, as may readily be imagined, a very comfortable task for a bleak January morning with no fire.

But breakfast was at length accomplished at a few

minutes before ten ; not, however, before the Doctor had repeatedly expressed his surprise that people should pertinaciously persist in living in these inclement latitudes. The thermometer out behind the camp indicated five degrees above ; but the Doctor no longer took any interest in the "glass." I noticed, that, for some days past, the flask in his breast-pocket had ceased to *swash*. The "quicksilver" was out.

'Twas a dull day in every sense. Not for a moment did the storm cease to drive and sift. About three o'clock we ventured out, well muffled in woollen "comforters," and proceeded to the swamp. In one of the traps near the still open muck-hole there was a small lynx : but the snow had already buried the trail made by the Doctor's "catamount" the previous afternoon ; and we quite gave up the idea of recovering the trap it had carried off. The lynx, however, we dragged to camp through the snow, and, having nothing better to do, chained it with the same with-collar and trap-chain with which we had previously fastened the raccoon. The animal was seemingly a last-spring kitten, not much more than half grown. By using a forked pole, we easily got the collar on its neck. But it immediately began *yawling* and *wauling* in a most hideous manner. Raed offered it a bone to gnaw, and the tails of the Doctor's fish. It would have none of his kindness ; would not so much as sniff the bone. All the time we were getting supper, it miauled and growled frantically ; and, to enhance the refrain, Grip bayed defiance from his corner in the camp.

We had it in mind to keep the brute for a few days.



Wash wanted a chance to study its habits, and make a drawing of it; but, as the evening advanced, the uproar became so unendurable, that he at length caught up the rifle, and, rushing out, shot it.

## TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH DAYS.

Storm continues. — “Snow-bound.” — Reading. — Bits of Advice from the Doctor. — Snow-Drifts. — Fishing in the Storm.

STILL snowing, howling, driving, swirling down. The dull late light of morning found us half buried there. The thick evergreen thatch kept it out wonderfully well. The snow drifted into it all along on the sides and top, and gradually formed of itself an impervious roof and walls. Late the previous day, we had increased the height of our fire-shed. During the night we had taken turns watching the fire, which, if kept up at all, had to be kept on a roaring blaze, else the snow would put it out. Any other wood than that old pitch-pine would hardly have burned at all. The wind had risen considerably, and blew with occasional fierce gusts. Our position was a rather exposed one, from the northeast. But for our invaluable fuel, we could have wished ourselves down in the swamp.

The wind whirled a good deal of smoke in at the doorway, making reading a *tearful* pastime. This morning, the thermometer stood at one degree above only. Yet we were not uncomfortably cold: we were getting inured

to this out-door temperature. But the beef, and indeed the pies, were getting suggestively scant.

I can hardly explain it: but those chapters of "Copperfield" read and discussed during this storm are most vividly of all impressed on my memory; as are also the first three papers of Tyndall's "Fragments of Science," which Wash read aloud, the rest of us sitting close around him. It was rather ludicrous, too, to see a fellow shed so many *genuine tears* over a purely scientific work. As for the Doctor, he said very little (but it was nevertheless clear that he had formed a private opinion of the situation), and perseveringly read "Love me Little, Love me Long," — the last of Wade's stock of *Reade*. I secretly wondered what he would do when that was finished. Every few minutes he would read us a passage aloud — one that he would deem particularly good — with the proper emphasis. Occasionally a bit of advice to us would be suggested; and he would break out, — as, for example, "Boys, if you want to succeed in life, study sharp to know what are folks' 'pet wishes' and 'darling hopes;' then pat them on the shoulder, and flatter them that they will be easily able to realize these — with a little of your help. That's the way to get on in public and professional life. Look at the 'ministers,' the clergy. They know that everybody wants to live after death, in another world; and they've always got a good living out of humanity by telling them how they may be able to do it. Look at my own case too. I happen to know that nobody wants to die; that everybody hates the idea of death. There's where I start. I go to work and get up a medicine that will lengthen human

life, — stave off the evil day of death a while, if nothing more; and I shall get independently rich out of it in twenty years. Mark my words, boys.”

Then the Doctor would resume his reading.

Next to the truculent shrewdness of these hints were Raed's well-guarded looks of deep, ineffable disgust with the same. Between them, they furnished a comic phase that did something toward relieving the tedium of the weather; for we did not stir out during the whole day.

During the next forenoon the storm ceased, for the most part; though the sky still continued cloudy, and the wind blew even harder than on the preceding day, making the snow fly in a lively manner. There had fallen, we estimated, fully fifteen inches on a level; but, in many places, the wind had drifted it eight and ten feet in depth. At the foot of the bluff on the lake shore there was a prodigious drift, in which Wade nearly got smothered while going down to the “hole” after water.

This morning we fried the last of our beef, and had only one of the Doctor's fishes left, of the flesh kind; and to remedy this deficit somewhat, if possible, all hands sallied out, with axe, snow-shovel, and fishing-tackle, to make a draft on the lake. Our rackets “cut in” badly. It took near an hour to get down to the scene of our former piscatorial exploits. Here we found, as we had expected, the place filled with snow. But half an hour's smart labor cleared it; and, although the temperature for three days had been not much above zero, there was but a film of ice in the hole. We had only some rather dry shreds of beef for bait, and dropped in with no great expectations. We were there-

fore very agreeably surprised to feel a bite in less than a minute, and pull out a pickerel weighing not less than three pounds. Five more were hooked in the course of an hour; one of them a small *togue* of about four pounds, we judged.

Down in the lake the finny tribes evidently knew nothing, felt nothing, of the storm, which, for the last three days, had scourged us so remorselessly; and we almost envied them — not the ones we had caught — their retreat as we faced the gusts back to camp.

Fish for supper, — fried.

## FOURTEENTH DAY (SUNDAY).

Fourteen Degrees below. — Too Cold to sleep. — The Hound in an Ague Fit. — Scorching and Freezing. — A Night long to be remembered. — Seventeen Degrees below.

THAT night the thermometer fell to fourteen degrees below. The cold aroused us toward midnight. It was too cold to sleep — with safety to fingers, toes, and noses. The fire was increased and trained up nearer the doorway. We wrapped ourselves in the blankets, and huddled together on the evergreen just inside the door. It was too cold to *live* back out of the firelight. Grip shivered and shook and whined. Wade let him loose; and he immediately cuddled himself between his master and the Doctor. The gusts of wind now and then flared the fire in upon us in scorching whirls and hot gushes of smoke. That was a night long to be remembered. We felt the near deadly grip of the ruthless elements. I think the Doctor was a little alarmed; for, indeed, we could not have endured a much greater sinking of the temperature. In the morning, the mercury stood seventeen degrees below. The wind continued to blow till afternoon, — so sharply, that one

could hardly have faced it for three minutes without freezing nose or cheeks. Toward night, however, the wind lulled, and the intense cold moderated somewhat; but it was a chilling night for all of that, — one I hurry over as a dreary memory, best forgotten.

## FIFTEENTH DAY.

Warmer. — Digging out the Traps. — One Beaver caught, but *frozen* hard. — A Lynx shot. — Lynxes and Caribou. — Wade caught in a Trap. — Thirteen Degrees above. — More groaning from the Lake.

MONDAY morning was bright, and *seemed quite warm*, — only one degree below! Beautifully calm, with the whole landscape dazzlingly white. We once more began to think of our traps. Buried under the snow we knew they must be deeply. To dig them out was plainly the first and only thing to be done. This would be something of a job; and we concluded to make two parties. Wash, Wade, and the Doctor volunteered to dig out and reset those in the swamp: Raed and myself were to go up to the beaver-traps. Some little time was consumed in making a second snow-shovel of pine; and it was ten, or after, before we got started. Walking slow and very tiresome; the rackets going in from four to five inches, and “loading” badly. We were considerably over an hour going up the lake to where the brook made in, and twenty minutes more wallowing up to the beaver-pond, where we found the “houses” so com-



pletely buried up, that the mounds were hardly distinguishable. The poplar-top, too, was drifted over. The cold snap had closed up the brook entirely; and the ice was covered with the recent snow. We had to dig industriously to find even the poplar-branches to which the traps had been chained, and then cut through six inches of ice to raise them. There was no appearance of beaver having been out since the storm: we were therefore not a little astonished, on attempting to lift out the second trap, to find in it a very heavy animal coiled up in a ball, drenched and drowned. It would have weighed fifty pounds for a guess; unmistakably a beaver. Strange as it may seem, the carcass, though lying in water, was frozen hard. Raed explained the phenomenon on the ground that the rapid motion of the water over the rocks on the bottom where the trap lay had alone prevented its freezing, whereas this motion had not been communicated to the body of the beaver. It would seem that the beaver had got into the trap before the storm came on, and drowned. The prospect of the brook opening again while we should remain was so unfavorable, that I thought it better to take up the traps.

Raed's great expectations from the discovery of this beaver colony were sadly abated, — one frozen beaver, frozen too hard to skin, though he carried him down to camp *to thaw*. From this individual I derived the measurements and general description given in the preface to this volume.

I could but marvel at the sagacity and providence of these animals as we passed their snug and comfortable

homes under the snow and ice, secure from the cold, and stored with their food; and I was not sorry to leave them unmolested for the future forever. May it be many a year before any prowling trapper or tourist shall stumble on their sylvan retreat!

Wash and Wade, with the Doctor, had come in from the swamp before us. Wade had one of his feet sharply pinched by one of the traps springing while he was shovelling it out,—just by way of letting him know how *good* it felt, Wash sympathetically remarked to him; the Doctor adding, that it was sometimes a good thing for a man (meaning a doctor, I suppose) to take a dose of his own medicine. But they had shot a lynx, and had a big story to tell. A famous place for game was that old swamp! They had come upon three lynxes devouring the carcass of a small caribou (deer), seemingly killed not many hours ago! One of them they had shot: the other two had run off at the report; though they had, till then, stood their ground, growling viciously. I only wish all our amateur sportsmen could have heard friend Wash describe this adventure.

They had set all the traps about the carcass, save one they had not been able to find. Wade was confident it had been carried off before the storm, like the one we had lost several days previously. They had brought up a quarter of venison from the caribou carcass,—the under hind-quarter which the *cats* had not torn.

The weather had moderated steadily since noon.

At sunset the thermometer stood at thirteen degrees above.

At ten o'clock (evening) it was darkly overcast; and,

while up at two o'clock (morning) to replenish the fire, I saw that the mercury had risen to nineteen degrees above.

The same ominous noises from the lake which we had heard a week before had recommenced, though on an inferior scale. A "thaw" often follows a "snap" in these latitudes. The sky had the appearance of rain.

## SIXTEENTH DAY.

A "Thaw." — Another Trap gone. — We follow the Trail, and come up with the Animal in a Ravine. — A Bear's Den under a Jam of Drift-Logs. — The Doctor's Chloroform Project. — Some Chloroformed Bears. — The Doctor in a "Fix." — We try smoking them, and set the Jam afire. — Two captured. — Remarks on the Black Bear in Maine. — Story of a Bear with a White Face. — Old Mr. Edwards's Bear-Story.

THE morning disclosed a wet sky. The "hard growth" across the lake had taken a red-black hue. The noises from the lake continued at intervals. Thermometer rising steadily.

A fried fish and corncake breakfast, then off to the traps set round the caribou. We expected game, and stole in through the cedars quietly.

The carcass was gone, — not eaten up on the spot, evidently, but carried off in a lump. A trail through the snow, marked by tiny frozen bits of meat, showed which way *it* had gone, — a heavy trail, made by some powerful beast assuredly. Two of the traps lay sprung, all in a heap, just as they had rolled off the carcass. The third was gone, not with the caribou, but in an

opposite direction, making a very distinct trail where the clogs had dragged after it. The signs were rather complicated.

"Which is it best to follow, — the trap, or the carcass?" questioned Wash.

After some debate, it was decided most judicious to follow the trap. Grip was put on the trail; and we followed on our snow-shoes. The recent great fall of snow had added to the difficulties of a chase. The hound fairly buried himself at every leap. We could easily keep pace with him, and went on in this way for half a mile to where the old lynx-trail led up the side of the mountain: then we got a glimpse of the animal, resting on a log; but it instantly bounded off, and ran on up the hollow of the swamp stream. We could only get momentary sight of it; for it kept fully a hundred yards ahead, despite our utmost efforts to get a shot.

The bottom of the hollow was beset with logs and drift-stumps, and filled with a white-ash growth of amazing height, though the trunks were slender. The brook roared and foamed under huge "bridges" of snow, with here and there open falls and "races."

The cat was continually crossing from one bank to the other. The ravine narrowed, and the sides grew steeper, as we followed it up; and ere long we came in sight of a vast jam of logs and stumps, filling the whole gorge before us to the height of twenty or thirty feet. Some heavy freshet had lodged them here. Beneath and through the bottom of the mass the brook found its way, somehow, with hollow roar and gurglings. Huge icicles ten feet in length hung out from the confusedly projecting logs.

"Possible the lynx has got up over there?" exclaimed Wash.

We could see nothing of it; and halted a moment, lest it might be lying ready to spring behind some bush or log. But Grip ran on up to the foot of the dam; and, following cautiously after him, we espied where the animal had gone in between two great pine-logs near the bottom.

"A den!" cried the Doctor, lumbering up.

The hole was perhaps three feet in width, and looked as if it might lead back into a pretty roomy cavity.

"Seen the last of our trap, I guess," Wash remarked.

We were about approaching nearer to reconnoitre a little, when a sudden rumble and growling sounded from far within; and the *cat* as suddenly appeared in the mouth of the opening, snarling savagely. Grip jumped back a step, but bayed lustily. The creature acted strangely: crouching between the outer logs, it glanced, first at the dog, then back into the den. Wade fired (he had the rifle); and the lynx fell out into the snow, trap and all. A few licks from a club finished it, — a rather more than ordinary-sized *lucivee*, a male.

We stood looking it over, and were about proceeding to skin it, when a surprised snort, like that of a frightened horse, made us turn sharply. There, in the crevice between the logs, was the great black muzzle and head of *some sort* of a beast. As we turned, it was quickly drawn in; and we again heard the rumbling sound.

"For the Lord's sake!" shouted the Doctor, "what d'ye see that big head?"

"By ——!" muttered Wash. He was going to say *Jude*, but nipped it off.

"What was that?" cried Raed, who had only heard the noise.

From the glimpse and the general situation, I felt sure it was a bear, — possibly half a dozen of them; for from three to seven are not unfrequently surprised in these winter dens. The snow in front of the jam was trodden more than the lynx could have done. No doubt the bears had been out at intervals, though not much since the last snow. We could fancy a whole bear family disporting themselves there in the lee of the logs.

The boys were highly elated: so was the Doctor. How to get them was the question. We drew the lynx away, and skinned it before the body should become rigid. Grip had got sight of the bear's head, and was now eagerly snuffing about the hole.

"Wash, you'll have to crawl in there and shoot 'em," suggested the Doctor.

But Wash said he had no ambition to imitate either Sam Wheeler, or the more illustrious example of old Gen. Put: in short, he much preferred an open warfare beneath the smiles of the heavenly bodies to all such subterranean encounters.

Wade was next baited to undertake the shooting. We dwelt at length to him on the fact of his adroit marksmanship, which would, of course, make him perfectly secure. But he, too, preferred to exercise his eye for gunnery at a point not too far removed from the surface of the earth.

Raed excused himself on the ground that he "was no marksman; never was." And as for myself, I had long

since come to a fixed conclusion on this and all similar propositions.

Well, wouldn't the Doctor himself go? No, — decidedly. It would be highly unprofessional conduct; out of his line of practice: in short, it would be "*male-practice*," he was afraid, and himself the patient.

I thought we might, perhaps, smoke them out; but, come to *fumble*, we had no matches, and no axe to split up kindlings with.

It was something of a tramp back to camp. But the Doctor rather unexpectedly offered to go: and I volunteered to accompany him; for I foresaw that we should need dinner, and very likely supper, before getting through with the bears. "If the smoke doesn't fetch 'em, I think I know what will," remarked the Doctor sagaciously as we walked on.

"What's that?" said I.

"Chloroform!" exclaimed the Doctor.

"Have you got some?"

"Yes: 'most always carry a little bottle of it. But it's in my travelling-bag, back at the camp. That's why I offered to come."

I understood, but asked whether he felt sure it would have any effect *on bears*.

"Why not?" he demanded. "Powerful anæsthetic. Keel 'em over *instantly*. Then all we'll have to do will be to drag 'em out and slaughter 'em. The only thing that sticks me is how to administer it."

That *was* rather a poser; but I thought I saw the way out of it.

"We might put some of it on some meat," I sug-



gested, — “some of that lynx-meat, — and poke it in on a long pole. Very likely the bears are hungry. They couldn’t resist that fresh meat; and, even if they wouldn’t eat it, they would probably grab at it to tear it. Or you might tie a swab on the end of a pole, saturated with chloroform, and thrust that in. The bears, as it came near them, would be sure to sniff, and seize it with their mouths.”

The Doctor declared that this was the very way to do it.

“We’ll have ’em,” said he. “I wonder hunters have never thought of using *ether* and *chloroform* before. Ah, what new facilities medico-chemistry offers to all crafts!”

On reaching camp, the Doctor secured his chloroform-bottle; while I got matches, the axe, and did up what corn-bread and fish there was left from breakfast, and also the last but two of our pies. We then set off on our return-walk, which was accomplished in about an hour.

During our absence, the boys had been alternately guarding the den, and “gumming” from some spruces high up the sides of the gorge. The chloroform project was rehearsed to them. They were struck by its novelty.

“Why not try it first?” asked Wash. “The sooner, the better.”

A long moose-wood pole was cut, and a chunk of the *blue* lynx-meat stuck on the end of it. The Doctor then produced his bottle, and dropped on something like a tablespoonful; and, in order the better to retain it, we cut slits in the meat. None of the bears, if indeed

there were more than one, had made their appearance since the first alarm: all was quiet in the den. Yet I think it was not without some inward perturbations that the Doctor drew near, and ran in the pole. The rest of us had retired a little: Wade and Wash stood ready to shoot. Very cautiously and slowly the Doctor pushed in the *bait*, twelve, fifteen, twenty feet. Then came a rumble and a snort from far in. The pole was jerked sharply. The Doctor dropped it, and sprang away with cat-like agility. The pole wriggled once or twice afterwards; but no bear came out.

A great laugh rose at the Doctor's expense. (Those who stand at a safe distance are always very humorous on such occasions.) It subsided. The Doctor ventured up, and pulled out the pole. The meat was gone.

"If the brute's eaten it, he's drugged for one hour!" exclaimed he.

The question was, Had he eaten it?

"Try 'em with another chunk," suggested Wash.

Another was accordingly prepared. This time, the Doctor was more courageous: he held on. It was seized or struck, and tugged at as before; but the Doctor kept hold, even though, as he asserted, he heard them growl.

Two more pieces of the meat were thrust in and eaten, or, at least, wrenched off the pole. I then suggested to try a *swab*.

For this purpose, Wash contributed a pocket-handkerchief, — a frightfully dirty one; and Wade tore out a part of his waistcoat-lining. These were wound on, and bound tightly to the end of the pole. The Doctor then

saturated it with the "oily, soft-smelling" liquid. By this time the whole place was impregnated with the odor. Raed was afraid we might stupefy ourselves instead of the bears. The same rumbling noises we had before heard accompanied the thrusting-in of the swab; and it was repeatedly wrenched and pulled. There was some smothered growling, and a sound as of sneezing; but, on taking out the pole, we found that they had not torn the swab off. It was re-saturated, and run in again. Presently the *wrenchings* and *cuffings* ceased. Thrust it whichever way we would, the bears would not touch it.

"Chloroformed!" pronounced the Doctor.

We all thought it might be so.

"Well, now, which of you is going in there to drag 'em out?" he demanded.

We one and all demurred.

"Seems to me I've done my share already!" exclaimed the Doctor. "I've put 'em to sleep for ye!"

"Prove that," suggested Raed.

"Prove it?"

"Yes: only prove that they are really asleep, — sound asleep, — and we will any of us go in and hand them out."

"But how am I to prove it further," demanded the Doctor rather indignantly.

No one was at once able to answer that; but at length Wash observed that it looked as if the Doctor would have to make a little trial-trip into the den to ascertain. The Doctor declared it was plaguy mean of us to shirk so. But we all argued that he could

hardly expect us to take it for granted the bears were asleep on so slight evidence; and that, as he had assumed the putting-asleep part as his share, he must excuse us for wanting good proof that he had actually performed it, especially since the fact of a non-performance might be attended with very unpleasant consequences to us.

"Just a little trial-trip in where you can feel their pulses, Doctor," insisted Wash.

The Doctor was fairly cornered. Standing committed as he did to the chloroform scheme, he did not like to back down. He hemmed and hawed to us; but we insisted on "proof," and held him to it. Then all at once he buttoned up his overcoat, and, going up close to the hole, looked in earnestly. I did not believe we could get him in there; but, as if from a sudden impulse, he stooped and crawled in,—head and shoulders,—then drew back.

"It's awful dark in there!" he muttered, with an appealing look round to us; but I saw a gleam of resolution in his eye.

"You need a torch," I suggested.

"That's so!"

Wash happened to have a couple of pitch-wood splints in his pocket. One of these was lighted; and, seizing it desperately and nervously in his right hand, the Doctor again ducked, and crept in between the logs.

The boys stood looking on in silence, tinged with a sort of grim humor. The Doctor moved with great caution, stopping to listen at every foot. Stooping down, we watched him as eagerly as amusedly. He



ARMS, LEGS AND COAT-TAILS, ALL WHIRLING.



was certainly five minutes getting in fourteen or fifteen feet. There he halted; and we could see him thrusting out the torch, first right, then left. On a sudden there came a rumble and a growl. The Doctor jumped back with a loud shout. We all sprang away to seize the axe, and catch up the guns, and, turning, saw the Doctor vault out from between the logs, arms, legs, and coat-tails all whirling. He went into the snow, and rolled over and over, as if anxious to place all available distance between himself and the den, regardless of ceremony. At the same moment, I had a glimpse of a bear's head in the den. The Doctor got up, cast an anxious glance into the opening, then began to brush himself.

"Aren't so sound asleep as they might be, are they?" queried Wash.

"Oh, they're asleep fast enough!" exclaimed the Doctor: "the trouble is" (with another suspicious glance at the den), "*they get up in their sleep!*"

The chloroform method was an undoubted failure.

We took our lunch, and then decided to try smoking them.

A fire was accordingly built of dry stumps and logs which we pulled down from the jam; and, when it was well burning, we took brands, and, carrying them to the mouth of the den, threw them far in (twelve and fifteen feet), one after another,—a score of them. Immediately there was growling. The brands blazed up where they fell; and, the flame communicating from one to another, there was soon a smart fire going. The smoke gushed out—and, we presumed, in—in dense black wreaths. The growls grew louder. Wade stood

with the rifle cocked; and we all drew back. There was a sudden scramble, and out popped a big black fellow, half blinded with smoke evidently; for he jumped into the snow, then reared up on his haunches, and, catching sight of us or the hound, whirled about, and made a grand effort to climb up the side of the jam. He grasped a projecting log with both black paws, and drew himself upon it; then grasped into the roots of an old stump. Wade, standing with his rifle ready, fired coolly, and brought the creature down with a ball through its back, just above the hip. It lay sprawling; and Wash fired a load of heavy shot into the back of its head. The next moment, Grip had it by the throat.

We drew the carcass aside. Smoke was now streaming out of the whole great pile of logs at every chink; but, on looking in, I saw, that, in scrambling out, the bear had scattered the brands, and nearly put the fire out.

More were thrown in; and we hacked and slivered the old pine-logs which formed the mouth of the hole, and set them on fire. We were not sure there were others in the den, but thought perhaps there might be; and stood on the lookout, while the fire crackled and streamed up around the bottom logs. The pile did not immediately take fire. There seemed to be a great deal of ice and snow sifted in, and trickling down between the logs; but it gradually got under way, and began to roar grandly.

Just then we heard a squealing noise nearly or quite as sharp as that of a pig; and there burst out, amidst the flames in the hole, another bear, — a smaller one, — its hair in a lively frizzle and smoke.



Wash fired at it the other barrel of the shot-gun; when the frightened beast tacked off to the left, and ran headlong up the side of the ravine, the hound grappling with it at every leap. Finding itself likely to be pulled down, the animal suddenly threw its paws about a hemlock, and scratched up, making the bark fly mightily, and raising Grip by main strength six or seven feet clear of the snow; for he had a sharp hold of its flank. Reaching the first branches, it drew itself upon them, and paused to take breath. Wade at once shot it.

The jam was now burning up ruddily. If there were other bears in the den, they perished in the fire. The two we had killed were an old *male* bear and a *female* yearling cub. The boys and the Doctor took off their hides, while I went down to the swamp after our remaining two traps: we thought it would be well to set them around the carcasses of the bears.

By the time I had got back, the fire had burned down to a mass of wet frozen logs, which steamed rather than smoked. The boys were throwing pieces of meat on the fire: indeed, I had smelled the odor while yet a long way down the hollow, and thought they must be preparing a bear-steak. But Wash explained that they were merely *advertising* the carcasses to the noses of all neighboring prowlers; and, lest the presence of fire should frighten them, we drew one of the bears ten or twelve rods down the ravine. Beside it we set the traps, and chained them fast.

The bears we had killed were not large: the old one would hardly have weighed over a hundred and seventy-five pounds; the cub, less than a hundred. They were

of that short-legged, round-backed kind which our hunters call the "hog-back" bear, in distinction from the "racer;" for there are really two kinds of black bear in our Northern forests.

The "hog-back" is a small bear, often found very fat; has short club-legs; is not very swift; and runs from the hunter as timidly as a hare. Indeed, it is a *born* coward. In weight it rarely exceeds two hundred and fifty pounds.

The "racer," on the contrary, is quite another sort of a beast. These are the old fellows of which hunters tell such stories, — long-legged, swift as a moose almost, and often attacking a man at sight. Individuals of this sort (racer) have been reported weighing seven hundred, — literally monarchs of the woods.

I am not understood as figuring two distinct species (proper) of black bear; but I am inclined to believe that these *varieties* came originally from different quarters of the continent. No doubt they are now often found blending in characteristics.

A very singular *marking* has been occasionally reported of the *racer* bear; to wit, a *white face*. (No joke intended.) In two instances, the writer has heard it avouched in terms it would be difficult to gainsay or doubt; one, the story of his own grandfather, (and, if a fellow doesn't believe his own grandfather, whom should he believe?) which I will briefly repeat much as the old gentleman used to tell it to me. "'Twas the first year we were up here. The country was all new then. My father (that's your great-grandfather) came in the fall before, and bought this place of one John Clives,

who had made a clearing here two years before. Old John had got up a frame-house, twenty by thirty, — a very comfortable one in those days. You can see where the old cellar used to be out there. The only neighbor within three miles was Jefferson Edwards, who had begun over there where the Edwardses live now. There were about twenty acres in our clearing, all covered with stumps and stubs : they've rotted away since. Father felled ten acres more in the fall after he bought. It was along there under the mountain, what we now call the 'south field ;' and, when we came in the spring, that was about our first work, — cutting and piling that to get it ready to burn. My brother William and my brother Ezekiel were both older than I. We used to take our 'stints,' — to cut and pile so much each day. It was very hot and dry that spring ; and, when we burned it off, the fire got into the woods, and raged for a week. But wood was of little account then. After burning it, we planted it to corn ; but we didn't have to prepare the ground as they do now. It was rich enough of itself to bear any thing then. We didn't plough it : just went along, dropped the corn, and scraped a handful of dirt over it : that was enough. There were no weeds, either. All the care it needed was to go about with a bush-hook, and cut up the sprouts about the stumps. I say, all the care : I mean by that all the hoeing ; for it did need a good deal of care in one sense. It seemed as if every sort of bird and beast had a claim on it. In the spring, the crows and squirrels dug up the seed almost as fast as we could plant. We had to put some of it in the third time ; but it came on after

a while, and grew wonderfully. I've never seen such corn since.

"As soon as it was in the 'milk,' another struggle began for the corn. A perfect army of squirrels came into it. It did no good to shoot them: there were too many for that. Father used to keep Zeke and me down there walking back and forth along the log-fence with an old bell and a tin pan, drumming and ringing to keep them out. The fence was alive with chipmunks and red squirrels, running with their mouths full of corn. The gray squirrels carried a whole ear at once; but they were shy, and not as plenty. Then there was another larger squirrel, nearly as large as a cat. They had beautiful bushy tails, black as jet.

"Blue-jays and flocks of blackbirds were continually lighting down. It didn't take them long to swallow a bushel.

"These were the enemies by day; but the night turned out a worse tribe. A parcel of raccoons from the great ledge up there used to come down every night to feast upon the soft corn. We could always tell them by their curious track: it looked just like a little child's bare foot. We caught several in traps, — cunning-visaged fellows. They are of a gray color, and nearly as large as a fox.

"It was now about the middle of September, and the corn had got nearly ripe enough to cut up; when one morning, as we went into the field to begin our *music*, we came upon a large track, and saw all around where the corn had been crushed down and eaten. In some spots it was all flat for rods. We had thought the

'coons bad enough ; but what they had done was nothing compared to the wholesale work of the past night. These tracks were as long as those made by a large shoe, and much broader. They were trodden deeply too, and had the print of large toes.

"There were smaller ones of the same sort in other parts of the field. Three bears of different size had been there during the night. One, rather small, had gone along, breaking down the stalks, and eating the ears ; another, larger, had sat between the rows, and pulled the corn to him on both sides ; but the third, the one that made the big track, had walked along like a horse, biting out an ear here and there at a mouthful, leaving the husks stripped down. It looked as if he had 'been getting roasting-ears,' Zeke said. On hearing our story at noon, father went down. Edwards happened to be over, and went down with us. They both stared at the sight of the big track.

" 'That was an old racer,' said Edwards ; 'one of the tall, long-legged sort.'

"The others, they said, were small bears, such as they used to call 'hog-backs.'

" 'You'd better watch to-night,' said Edwards. 'Perhaps you'll get a shot at some of them ; though I declare,' said he, examining the track, 'I shouldn't care about facing that one. You'd find him as tall as a colt ; and I shouldn't wonder if he would weigh six or seven hundred pounds. They'll outrun a horse. Powerful animal. I saw one once.'

"But we didn't watch that night. We were all pretty tired ; and father said we would wait one night, and see.

And the next morning we did see — worse damage than the night before.

“ ‘Something must be done, boys,’ said father. ‘Never saw such work!’

“ ‘The corn was broken down in every direction.

“ ‘We’ll watch to-night, Jud. You and Zeke wash out the guns. See that the flints are in right. And you run some bullets, William.’

“ ‘We had three guns. One was an old United-States piece, with large gripes along the barrel: the second was what they called a French gun, — one of those taken from the French when the New-England folks took Louisburg: the third was mine, — a little shot-gun, good for squirrels a rod or two off.

“ ‘Soon after dark, we went down to the field. We didn’t expect the bears before ten or eleven o’clock; but we meant to be before them.

“ ‘The field was narrow, and very long, — nearly a quarter of a mile. The bears had been in at both ends. So father was to take his place at the farther end, with the old United-States piece; Will the upper end, with his French gun; while I was to go midway, — in the safest place, they said. There was no gun for Zeke: so he armed himself with the pitchfork, and stood by Will. In this way we were over fifty rods apart.

“ ‘Here, Jud,’ said father as we came near the middle of the piece, — ‘here’s a good place for you. Sit down here behind this clump of basswood-sprouts. I don’t much think they’ll come in here; but sit still and watch. Don’t fire unless you see a bear.’

“ ‘Then he went on, leaving me to watch and listen.

An hour passed, — a pretty long one. All was still as the grave. But I had a nice snug place among the green basswood. The leaves were thick and large as dinner-plates. I was expecting every minute to hear the gun of father or Will. All at once, I heard something behind me in the corn: but it was father coming along to see if we were all right; and pretty soon he went back to his place.

“Another hour went by. The moon had now risen; but it was a little hazy, and the light was rather dim. Several owls were hooting off in the woods; and now and then I could hear the long yell of a ‘bobcat’ wandering about in search of his supper. I began to get rather lonesome. Suddenly there was a crack in the brush below me in the woods, as if a large stick had broken. I crouched, listening intently, and presently heard a loud *woosh*, — a sort of snort, as you’ve heard a horse after running in a frolic; and soon the brush cracked again, — nearer this time. I knew some heavy animal was coming. I was scared enough; but they had laughed at me so much, I resolved not to run until I had a chance to fire. The cracking had stopped; and the same snorting noise was repeated, as if the bear had smelled me. I peered through the sprouts, with my gun cocked ready to fire. There stood a huge creature, not a rod off, with its head up, snuffing, and looking into the bush.

“But could that be a bear? His face was as white as a white-faced calf, though the rest of his body looked black enough. He took a step towards me. I pulled the trigger, and ran for dear life. I scarcely

knew whether my gun had gone off or not; but I fancied I heard another snort behind me. I ran headlong through the corn, toward the house.

“‘Is that you, Jud?’ cried a voice in front of me.

“It was Will and Zeke coming down at the sound of my gun. I stopped, and gasped out my story. They didn’t care to hurry down there: so we all stood waiting for some sign from the bear. Just then we heard father shout from the place where I had been; and then we went down.

“‘Who fired?’ asked he. ‘Was it you, Jud?’

“‘Yes; Jud fired, and ran,’ said Will. ‘He was making a bee-line for the house, when we stopped him.’

“‘I guess he didn’t run any too soon,’ said father. ‘Look at those sprouts! See how they are broken down!’

“Sure enough, the clump in which I had been hidden was crushed flat; and the next day we saw large tracks about it, and there was a drop of blood on one of the leaves: so I could boast of hitting him. But where did he go so quick? Nobody had seen him but me; and my story of his white face found no favor with anybody. Father and the boys wouldn’t believe a word of it; and Edwards laughed as if he would split when they told him.

“‘Tell us any thing but that, Jud,’ said he, ‘and we’ll believe it; for you’re a plucky little fellow to face him at all with such a gun as that.’

“The next night, father shot one of the hog-backs in the corn. The wicked little face of that one was black enough; and, after that, my white-faced bear became a



worse joke than ever. So I said no more about it; though I was very far from believing that it was 'all moonshine,' as they told me.

"We got in our corn not long after that. There was a fine crop, though nearly every thing had had a share in it.

"Well, winter passed; and the next spring we began to lose sheep. Hay had come out short, and we had turned the sheep out early. We used to find their pelts nicely rolled up out in the woods, and saw the same large tracks about that we had seen in the cornfield. Edwards was in the same fix too.

"'It's bear's work,' said he. 'Some old fellow has come out of his winter den with a good appetite for mutton. He'll have all of our sheep if we don't look out. I'll watch to-morrow, if you'll do the same next day.'

"We gladly agreed to that, and so the matter stood. Well, just at dusk the next night, Mrs. Edwards saw a bear come among their flock, which was nibbling near the edge of the woods. He took a sheep, and was off in a moment. She called Edwards, who was in the barn. He caught up his gun; and they both ran after the bear into the forest, hoping to make him drop the sheep. It was quite dark in the woods; and, as they ran on, they suddenly saw the bear coming back to meet them. He had dropped the sheep, but not in the way they had expected. Edwards fired at him; but somehow, in his hurry or fright, he missed him. He was always a nervous man. On came the bear; and they were now glad to run from him as fast as they had run

after him. He chased them clean into their house. In the scrimmage, Edwards had lost the flint out of his old gun, and couldn't use that. I suppose the bear did actually keep them in the rest of the night.

"'Twas a tremendous fellow!' said Edwards the next morning when he told us; 'and, Jud,' said he, turning to me as he went out, 'I shall have to own that he had a white face, or something very much like it.'

"The next day we lost another sheep; and it was then decided to give up work, and hunt the bear down.

"'It's the only thing we can do now,' said Edwards. 'We've got to kill him, or *he will us*.'

"So the next day we started after him, — five of us, with the two dogs. We soon found where he had eaten the sheep. There was the pelt lying just where he had taken it off; and towards nightfall we came up with him. He had turned upon the dogs, and sat facing them, as if he were very much surprised at their sauciness; for there was a look of great contempt on his broad white face, — white enough now, as we all could see. He drew himself up, bear fashion, when he saw us, and stood his ground. We all cocked our guns.

"'You fire first, Edwards,' said father; 'and we will stand ready in case you don't kill him.'

"Edwards fired. The ball struck the old fellow in the shoulder, whirling him half round; but in an instant he recovered himself, and came at us. Will and I blazed away with our buckshot; but he would certainly have hugged some of us if father had not made a saving shot just in the nick of time. He kept his fire till the bear was within ten feet; then gave him a ball from

the old United-States piece straight through the breast. That settled him.

"He was, as Edwards had said, a 'regular racer.' Though not very fat, he dressed off four hundred and thirty pounds. His legs seemed twice the length of the hog-backs which we killed the fall before. But the most peculiar thing about him was his white face. It was as white as milk; and his muzzle had that clear pink-color you often see in white-faced cattle. I always thought it was the one I saw in the corn-field. There were several little scars that looked like shot-marks on his nose. His being fired at so much, and missed, or only slightly wounded, accounted for his boldness, and the fierceness with which he turned upon us. The fact that I did really see a white-faced bear was thus proved."

And I should certainly err were I to omit the bear-story of old Mr. Edwards (son of the above), — the one he always tells the boys. (But perhaps our girl-readers had better — But, of course, no girl will ever read this book.)

I shall try to straighten out the old man's English a little; which is, I regret to say, of a rather sorry sort.

"It was when I was a boy," he says. "The neighborhood where our folks lived, up in Franklin County, had lately been cleared up.

"There were three families beside my father's folks. We all lived within a quarter of a mile of each other. The Wilbers were our nearest neighbors on one side, — a great family of girls and boys; and, of the latter, Sam and Sol were about my age. We used often to go

gunning together; and one fall we took it into our heads to go up to Loon Pond, a small lake about five miles above our place, to see if we couldn't shoot an otter or a few minks.

"It was all woods about the pond then; but we were used to woods.

"I remember just what a beautiful afternoon it was. The leaves were turning yellow and red; and the squirrels were running and *chittering* in every direction. We came out on the pond-shore, and went along for as much as a mile, and then came back, without getting any thing but a couple of muskrats. Probably we made too much noise for the mink or otter.

"The water was very low; and at one place the shore was a bed of white sand. Right opposite this, out eight or ten rods, was a sort of bar of sand and pebbles, which was just above the water.

"The afternoon sun shone in warm; and altogether it looked so nice and inviting, that we concluded to go in swimming. So we laid down our guns across an old log, and undressed; each leaving his little gray pile of jacket and pants topped out with his white shirt. In a moment more we were splashing and wading off towards the sand-bar. The water in the deepest place between that and the shore was just up to our mouths.

"We got on to the bar without swimming; then jumped in on the other side, took a turn out and back, and were standing on it, skipping stones out into the pond, when, all of a sudden, a noise on the shore behind us made us all three look round together.

"Two black creatures, about as large as fair-sized

dogs, only chubbier, were snuffing at Sol's clothes, — snuffing, and pawing them over.

“‘Gracious!’ exclaimed Sam. ‘Bears!’

“‘Right between us and the guns!’ cried Sol.

“We stared in no little alarm.

“‘Don’t be scared,’ said I, getting courage as I looked: ‘they’re little chaps. Guess we can drive them off. Let’s yell at them.’

“So we began to screech, and splash into the water. The bears drew back toward the alders, sniffing with extended muzzles, as if uncertain about us. We redoubled our *hurrahs*, and ran into the water half way to the shore. But, in the midst of our *pow-wow*, we suddenly heard a great smashing among the bushes; and out bounded another bear, twice as large as either of the first ones.

“‘Twas all plain enough to us now, — an old bear and two half-grown cubs.

“The moment we saw the old one, we knew we had got our match. She ran directly down to the edge of the water; and we were glad to scramble back to the bar.

“The old bear then ran to our clothes, and began to scratch them over, — not very gently: we could hear *rips* as she scratched on them like a dog. She next ran to examine the guns, smelled of them, didn’t like them at all, and turned round, growling, to the water again.

“‘What’s to be done?’ said Sol.

“‘Stone them!’ exclaimed Sam, catching up a handful of large pebbles.

“We went at it, and let the stones fly good. Ever so many hit them; and the cubs fairly took to the bushes

But it only made the old one more mad. She kept rushing down to the water, threatening to swim out to us.

"We kept the stones flying for a number of minutes, and then waited a long time. The old torment wouldn't budge, but sat there watching us, just as if she knew she had us in a tight place.

"How to get our clothes and get away was a tough problem.

"'If we only had the guns!' we kept saying. But that was just where the bear had the *inside track* of us.

"'Only one way,' said Sam at last. 'We must swim across to the other side. Have to stay here all night if we don't.'

"It was about a hundred rods to the other shore. We stood dreading it some time; but, as there was no other way, we finally plunged in, taking Sol between Sam and myself. He wasn't quite so easy in the water as we.

"It was a pretty long pull; but we got to the shore at last; and after resting a few minutes, and seeing that the bear had not left the other shore, we started for home.

"Beats all how easy a chap can run without his clothes on! We weren't more than an hour legging it round the head of the pond, and down to the clearing back of Mr. Wilber's.

"But here a new bugbear came up. We didn't dare to go down to the house in our present state; but, as the barn stood some distance back of the house, we at length made for it, and, getting in through the sheep-

hole on the back-side, hunted round, hoping to find some old coat or something to rig up in. There was nothing, however, but a meal-bag.

"After some deliberation, we ripped a hole in the bottom of it for Sam's head to go through, and two more in the sides for his arms. He put it on, and, thus equipped, sallied into the house. Sol and I climbed up on the haystack to be out of sight.

"Ere many minutes, Sam came back with some clothes, which we hastily donned.

"There was a great giggling among the girls when we came out dressed.

"The next morning we borrowed some guns, and went back up to the pond. The bears had gone. We found our clothes somewhat torn, and well trampled into the sand. The guns were where we had set them."

## SEVENTEENTH DAY.

Cold again. — Yet Another Lynx, and a Third Trap gone — The Hound at Fault. — We come to the End of the Trail. — A Long Jump. — The Doctor's Opinion; also Wash's. — The Caswell and Parlin Adventure. — Old Sabattus's Panther-Story. — His Squaw. — His Dog.

IT cleared off "squally" during the night; and there fell, perhaps, an inch of snow and hail. Last pie but one for breakfast, on a substantial basis of fried pickerel and corn-cake; the only ingredients of which, except meal, were water and salt. Not sumptuous. Then off to examine our traps set about the bear carcass. Grip ran on ahead as we entered the hollow. Yesterday's trail had frozen hard enough to bear him. We heard him bark sharply, and then rapidly.

"Game in the traps!" said Wash.

Coming in sight, we saw a lucivee standing on the carcass, with its back up at the hound. Wouldn't budge for him; but, the instant it caught sight of us, it turned and ran. Not fast in the trap by any means. Yet the hound followed it so closely, that, a few rods far-



ther up the ravine, it ran up one of the tall ashes to the very top, — more than a hundred feet.

Wade fired at it with the rifle; and Wash followed with both barrels of the shot-gun: but still it held on. The shot brought down a perfect mist of fur. Wade reloaded, and started to climb up the side of the hollow, to be more on a level with it; when it suddenly dropped heavily, — quite dead.

We turned to the traps. One was sprung, with a few gray hairs clinging to the jaws: the other was gone. The fid and seven links were still on the sapling to which we had chained it: the eighth link had broken or pulled open. We had supposed the chain strong enough to hold even a bear. There were a number of large tracks about the carcass, and a trail leading off to the left up the side of the gorge; but the tracks and trail had been made early in the night, before the snow-squall, which had partly filled them up. Evidently the lynx we had just shot had nothing to do with them.

The tracks were large; but a lynx makes a pretty large track.

We were vexed with the loss of another trap, and immediately laid on the hound. Away he went up the side of the hollow; and we followed, climbing by aid of the tree-trunks. At the top of the bank the track diverged to the right, and led off toward the mountain. We went on for perhaps a third of a mile up rising ground, the hound now a long way in advance: then, quite abruptly, his baying ceased. For the next hundred yards we heard nothing of him.

“I don’t understand this,” said Wade.

"Why, there he is now!" exclaimed Raed suddenly.

Grip was standing in the trail a few yards off, looking at us rather sheepishly.

"Bolted the trail!" cried the Doctor. "The cur!"

Wade didn't believe that slander.

Grip turned as we came toward him, and ran on again. About twenty rods farther, we came up in sight of a long, overhanging ledge.

"Another den, I'll bet!" groaned Wash.

The snow had dropped over the rocks, and lay in a long drift at their base, but not to such height as to conceal the gray face of the ledge, extending off on both sides till lost to sight among the spruces. From the top of the drift up to the top of the rock where it jutted out was a space of from fifteen to twenty-five feet all along. The trail led up on to the drift; and there stood the hound waiting for us, with a puzzled look which seemed to say, "I don't know what to make of this. Do you?"

We saw that the trail ended right under where the dog sat, and glanced along the bottom of the ledge. It was one solid wall of coarse *mica schist*.

"No signs of a den," said Wade.

"It can't be possible the animal has jumped to the top," remarked Raed, taking a step back to look up.

"But he *has*, fellows!" he immediately exclaimed.

"There's his track at the top, in the snow there!"

We all stepped back from under, and stared. The beast had gone up at a single spring. The distance was somewhere from fifteen to twenty feet: could not have been under seventeen, I think.

It gave us a queer sensation, the sight of this grand evidence of muscular energy.

"Boys," said the Doctor, "I think we've followed this beast plenty far enough. I move we adjourn *sine die*."

We all edged away, half expecting to see the fierce head of the prowler appear over the brow of the ledge. Grip followed, still wearing his seriously-puzzled expression. I do not expect he ever understood it exactly.

Of course, Wash thought it was a catamount. And it did look a little like it; for no lynx could possibly have leaped to such a height with the trap on its foot.

We went back to camp, taking the lynx-pelt along, and somehow felt sort of "queerish" as night came on. The prodigious leap up the ledge reminded us unpleasantly of the Caswell and Parlin adventure up on the St. John's a few years since. They were following on the trail of a caribou they had wounded, which at length led down into the river-valley, where maple and ash took the place of the spruce-growth. Not many years previously, a whirlwind had swept through that section. Many of the great ashes had been broken off or partially uprooted, and lodged in the tops of others.

They had gone four or five miles, and still the trail led on over fallen trunks, and through bushy thickets of hazel and alder, which they had to walk around to avoid tangling their snow-shoes, when they came to where the trail stopped short. Beyond a certain point, where the snow was all beaten down and bloody, there were no farther tracks. The young lumbermen stared at the trail, then into each other's puzzled faces.

"Well, that beats me!" Parlin ejaculated. "Where'd he go to?"

Caswell was walking round to the other side. It was plain that the deer had struggled violently here; but where or how it had gone was a mystery.

"Should 'a' thought a bear or a bobcat had tackled it, if there was any track leading off," Caswell said, prodding with his gun into the light snow.

"Can't be it's got under the snow," said Parlin, also walking round, and prodding the drifts as he did so.

They were both at their wits' end; but just then Caswell's eye caught sight of a peculiar footmark in the stained and blood-soaked snow. Once before had he seen a track like that.

"Look, look!" he exclaimed in a terrified voice. "See here! A catamount's foot!"

Instinctively both turned their eyes toward the tree-tops. Fifteen or twenty feet from the ground an ash had broken off, and fallen over at right angles to its stub. There, on the lofty log, at the angle of breakage, crouched a large, gray-furred beast, with the deer in its mouth. Its eyes flashed green fires. Its long tail switched to and fro with a restless, spiteful motion; and its broad-spread claws were struck into the bark, and kept clutching with a sharp, crackling noise.

They afterwards remembered that they had heard that sound on first coming up, but had thought it was caused by woodpeckers. The instant they looked up, the creature screeched frightfully, with the fawn still in its mouth, — screeched, and sprang at them ere they had time to take a backward step.

"Never shall I forget," said Caswell while narrating the adventure, — "never shall I forget the feeling of fright it gave me to see the fierce brute coming down through the air, with his claws spread out to seize us, and his mouth half opened, from which the dead fawn was falling. I recollect leaping frenziedly backwards on my rackets; and the next instant I heard Parlin cry out, and saw him rolling over and over in the light snow, with the catamount grabbing at him, — grabbing, and growling short and savage.

"He had gone right over backwards; and the way he hollered and kicked and rolled and squirmed, to keep the creature from throttling him, wasn't slow. The snow was just like feathers; and he went down into it all over. Between them, they made it fly so that it was hard telling which was which.

"Just as quick as I had regained my legs, I cocked my gun, and aimed; but it was two or three seconds before I really dared to fire, they were so mixed up. I had in the gun a big load of buckshot; and, when I pulled the trigger, the muzzle wasn't more'n six inches from the creature's breast. Well, sir, it fairly blowed him off of Parlin. Sent him all in a heap into the snow.

"Such a shrill yelp I never heard! Then he rose right up, and came at me. I struck him over the head with the barrel of my gun; that knocked him partly over again: and I just kept on striking him as hard as I could, — more than a hundred blows. It seemed as if I must have pounded him all to a jelly. But he would keep rising up at me, his eyes shining, and his teeth glistening. The barrel of the gun came out of the

stock: then I pounded him with the barrel alone till I fairly fractured his skull.

"Parlin had crawled out of the snow a little, groaning and *taking on*. He was covered with blood; and his clothes were stripped and slit all to pieces where the creature had clawed him. One of his arms was scratched to the bone in slits clean down to his wrist, and the other arm was bitten in one place.

"He had one bite in his leg too, and lighter scratches all over his body. I did have a time of it getting him back to the shanty! He was sort of stunned like, and weak as a rag from the blood he had lost.

"It was more than two months before those scratches and bites closed up. Somehow the flesh wouldn't heal, and was — oh, so sore! He will carry those scars to his dying day."

Whoever undertook to write the early history of the State of Maine, his account would be incomplete without liberal mention of "Old Sabattus," whose panther adventure was not greatly unlike the above. All over the State, one keeps coming upon a "Sabattus's Hill," or "Sabattus's Rock," or "Sabattus's Point;" and there is a town called "Sabattusville." These are all named after an "old Indian man" who used to hunt through this section, and lived up at the foot of the Richardson Lake; had a wigwam and squaw there. He may have been a Passamaquoddy Indian; though some say he came here from Canada. The writer's grandfather remembers him, and says, —

"He used to be round here as late as 1820. About the first I remember of him was his coming to our

camp in some wild lots my father and old Mr. Edwards were clearing up together.

"We were working at some distance from our camp, and, on going down to it one night, spied a strange-looking object boozing over our fire. On first coming in sight, we had taken it for some animal; but, at nearer view, Edwards pronounced it to be 'Old Sabattus.'

"The old fellow was on his way up to his wigwam on the Richardson, from a visit to the settlements to dispose of furs; and was about as drunk as he could well be, and go. But he had contrived to knock over a hedgehog, which he had brought along on his back for several miles. And such a plight as he was now in!—for the quills had gone through his blanket, and fixed themselves into his back in a hundred places. Father and Edwards worked over him all that evening, with an old pair of pinchers, and *pincers* made of split sticks, trying to pull them out. But a great many of them had already gone in too far to be got out; and the old chap carried them off with him the next morning.

"Now, as a hedgehog's quill will keep moving and going on in the flesh in the direction it has entered, there was considerable room for conjecture as to how the dozen or twenty already beneath his skin would turn with him. Father was of the opinion that they would work through and into his lungs and heart; but Edwards didn't believe any thing could kill the old man. Well, some three weeks after, who should we see coming in one night but Sabattus, bringing us a fine quarter of deer!

"The quills were then just coming out on his breast

They had either gone clean through him, or else round him, under the skin. He declared, however (what we could easily believe), that the sensations had been creeping and horrible to the last degree.

“The boys were always coaxing him to tell his adventure with the catamount, in the recital of which his peculiar language and gestures offered a great fund of merriment. As nearly as I can recall it, the story was this: —

“Sabattus with his dogs, three in number, had been hunting along the banks of the Androscoggin; when one day, just after having brought down a moose, and while he was skinning it, with his dogs looking on, a catamount sprang down from a tree-top, and, seizing one of the dogs, leaped back with it into the tree.

“All Indians, as is well known, have a superstitious dread of the cougar; and, instead of shooting at the creature, Sabattus made off with his remaining dogs, and went a day’s walk up the river before venturing to stop or hunt again. But the panther had followed him; and a few evenings after, as he was sitting by his fire, with his dogs lying by his side, down came the fierce beast, and, with a horrible growl, pounced upon another of his dogs.

“In the dim light of the darkening forest, the trembling hunter could discern its glaring eyes flashing from the tree-top as it tore and devoured the dog.

“Again Sabattus fled, and this time put a two-days’ walk behind him. But he had scarcely begun cooking his supper on the evening of the second day, when, for the third time, the catamount came springing down, and



catching up poor Grab, his last dog, ran up the trunk of a large rock-maple. This was coming pretty close. There were no more dogs to stand between him and the monster.

“‘Sabattus no run,’ as he used to tell it. ‘Sabattus no run this time. No good run. Sabattus’s turn next.’

“He must either kill the catamount, or the catamount would kill him. He raised his gun; but for a long time his shaking hands refused to aim. At last, resting it across the root of a fallen tree, he got it a little steadier: still muttering, as he glanced along the wavering barrel, ‘Sabattus’s turn next; Sabattus’s turn next!’

“But the old chap’s hands must have been pretty tolerably steady, after all; for he wounded the creature, fatally too, with the first shot; and, after watching his dying agonies for a long time, at length had the satisfaction of seeing him stiff in death.

“It was rare that an Indian boasted of the charms of his squaw. Sabattus was a little given to that weakness, however; and, if tradition be true, old Mollocket was deserving of his pride. To have rated any woman more beautiful than Mollocket would have been to give mortal offence to Sabattus. Whatever her charms may have been, she had beauty’s love for ornament; and, during her life, had collected quite a quantity of jewelry, all of which was buried with her at the foot of Richardson.

“The spot has since been dug over for rods around by the woodsmen, in the hopes of finding it; but nothing has ever been discovered save a few steel traps. One little shaggy, red-haired Scotchman, after digging and nuzzling about there for several days, went off in great

wrath, exclaiming, 'De'il be with me but I did believe the ould jade carried it *through* with her!'

"After the death of Molloket, Sabattus abandoned his wigwam up at the lake, and for a long time wandered about homeless. But, as years crept over him, the infirmities of age, and memories of the past, took him back; and the old wigwam was rebuilt. Here, for nine years, he lived alone with Paugus, his dog; and, during the last two years, he is said to have been wholly blind. But, ere his eyesight had entirely failed, he had stretched lines of bark from his wigwam to the spring, and also to several points along the lake, where fish could be caught: and from these blind fisheries, and occasional partridges and rabbits run down and brought to him by Paugus, he still continued to support life; for, during all these years, the faithful dog stood by him, and watched over him in his blindness. And now comes the most remarkable part.

"Sabattus had a son living somewhere in Canada; where, he didn't even know himself. But this son had once visited him at the lake, and Paugus had seen him; and, during the second year of Sabattus's blindness, the dog, seemingly mindful of his master's infirmity, left the wigwam, and, traversing a wilderness of two hundred miles into Canada, went about from town to town till he had found his master's son, whom he sought by every means in his power to induce to go back with him. But the young Indian did not even recognize the dog, and repeatedly beat him and drove him away. Paugus then returned to his master, but in a few weeks repeated the trip, though with as little success as before.

The careless son either could not or would not understand; and the noble dog again went back to his master's wigwam. But, in less than a month after, he had gone to Canada for the third time. Struck by his strange persistence, young Chook now bethought himself of his father, and, accompanying Paugus through the wilderness, found him in the condition referred to above."

This is certainly one of the most remarkable dog-stories on record.

Sabattus went with his son to Canada, where he died shortly afterward.

## EIGHTEENTH AND LAST DAY.

The Last Pie. — We break up Camp. — Mr. Lurvy and his Horse-Sled. — We apply for the "Bounty" on Our Bears. — A "Little Scene." — Advice to Young Sportsmen. — Amount received for our Furs. — Camping out in January.

A STIR at sunrise. Ate the "last pie" for breakfast; packed up our remaining traps and "kitchen furniture," also our *furs*; then got out our moose-sled.

Adieu to the green camp on the bluff, and the old pine-fire!

It was a wild, gusty morning. Snow-squalls were skurrying over. We crossed the lake, and made a "bee-line" for the settlement, leaving winter and savagery to reign undisturbed over swamp and lake.

Got down to the "cleared land" at a little past one o'clock, P.M., and, at the "second house," begged and *paid for* a dinner; also struck a bargain with the man, a Mr. Lurvy (I merely guess at the spelling), to take us down to the upper stage terminus on his horse-sled.

This is about all there is to tell.

One incident more.

A few miles below Mr. Lurvy's, we passed through a *village* of six houses, one of which was a "store," and also bore the signs of POST-OFFICE and TOWN-TREASURER.

A thought struck me. Why not have the State "bounties" on our bears?

"Agreed!" exclaimed Wash.

"Of course we will!" cried the Doctor.

The sled was halted; and we all five went in to inquire. The place, inside, had the usual "counter," crates, and molasses-hogshead, as also the standard odor of "West-India goods" and codfish. There was a box-stove in the centre of the room, facing the door. It seemed a good deal choked for breath, and as a consequence, perhaps, had turned very red in front. It had lost one leg, and had that deficiency supplied by a brick stood on end.

Three or four backwoodsmen were sitting about it; one with his feet on the form, and his back to the door. They all looked round as we entered, save the latter: whence I guessed, correctly, that he must be the store-keeper. So we went round him, to the back of the stove, to get to face him; and said Wash, —

"Are *you* the town-treasurer, sir?"

The man took time: he gave us an indifferent glance; then he opened the stove-door, and looked to the state of the fire. At length he said he supposed he was, but in a tone which seemed to indicate that there was a great deal of uncertainty of it; so much so, that Wash was quite disheartened by it, and looked inquiringly to the rest of us. Thereupon I said that we had killed a

couple of bears *up here in the woods*, and had called to get the State bounty on these animals.

"The bounty is two dollars per head, is it not, sir?" Raed asked.

"Tu dollers apiece when proved," said the treasurer. "You must fetch on the hides."

Wade and Wash stepped out to the sled, and, bringing them in, threw them down on the floor. The treasurer, leaning forward from his chair, smoothed them out, the others looking on. Then they winked to each other, and began to laugh.

"Well, what is it?" I said.

The men took their pipes out as if it were really a good thing, — a joke. The treasurer straightened back in his chair.

"Whar's the nose and ears to these 'ere hides?" he demanded.

"The nose and ears?" exclaimed Wash.

"Sartin! — the nose and ears."

"What's that to do with it?" Raed asked.

"Consid'able, I should think," replied this well-posted officer. "We pays no bounties on hides as don't have the *nose* and *ears* on 'em. Whar's the noses and ears? that's what I ask ye."

I explained that we were not aware of the provisions of the law in this respect, and had left the parts specified on the carcass.

"Humph!" ejaculated the treasurer: "now, I suppose you haven't presented these 'ere same bar-skins to the treasurer of some other town, have ye, an' gut yer money on 'em, an' he's cut off the nose an' ears, an' destroyed 'em, as he's bound by law to do?"

"Certainly we have not!" exclaimed Raed.

There was an incredulous snort; and they all laughed again.

"Come on!" exclaimed Wade in great disgust. "No use fooling with them!"

"Not a bit o' use, youngster!" the treasurer flung after him. "Next time, remember yer *nose* and *ears*! Oh, ye can't gum me!"

"Shut up your foul mouth!" shouted the Doctor, turning in the doorway in a passion. "Keep your dirty suspicions to yourself!"

Another *haw-haw* arose from within; and, as we got on the sled, I saw, through the dirty glass-panes of the door, the face of the treasurer watching us off with surly contempt.

Young sportsman, never forget the *ears* and *nose* of your bounty-drawing pelts.

For our fur we received in Boston five dollars for lynx; eleven, thirteen, and fifteen for otter; four for fisher; three and a half for beaver; nine for bear. And our profits may be briefly summed:—

11 lynx	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	\$55.00
3 otter	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	39.00
1 fisher	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	4.00
1 beaver	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3.50
2 bear	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	18.00
Total								<u>\$119.50</u>

Not a great haul; but we had the sport.

We have found January a more agreeable month for

camping out than July; yes, and a more comfortable month! This may seem a paradox. It is nevertheless true; in Maine at least. And the reasons are not far to seek.

1. First and foremost, there are no mosquitoes nor *biting* flies of any sort.

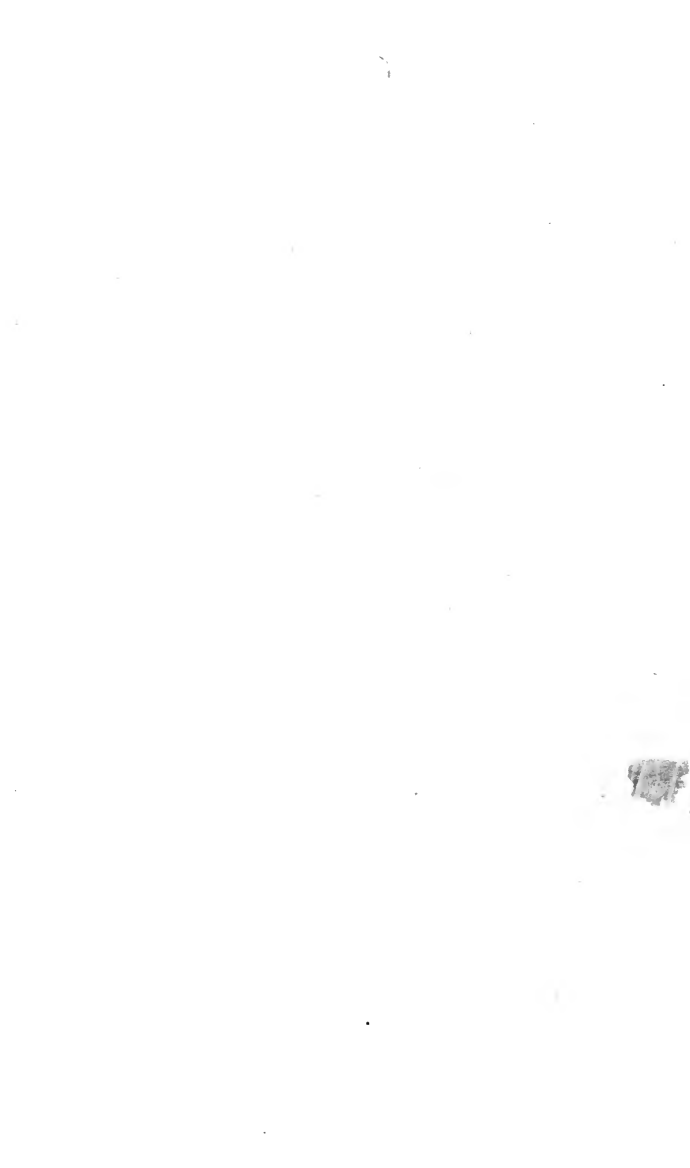
2. The air is dryer after the swamps, streams, and lakes are frozen, and snow has fallen. There is less dampness rising. One is less liable to take cold nights. By taking along a good store of blankets, coats, and "comforters," and building a good warm camp, there is no need of suffering much, if any, from cold. We had only three "severe nights." The first of these was the manifest result of our own imprudence. The two last came when the temperature was down to from seventeen to twenty degrees below zero; and had we taken along a sufficiency of blankets, and used more care in constructing our camp, we should not have been seriously inconvenienced. A camp should always be located near a supply of old dry pine or spruce: pine is best. This can be easily managed almost anywhere throughout the "wild lands" of Maine.

3. The forest is really lighter, pleasanter, and more airy, after the leaves have fallen, and the snow has come; or, at least, the exhilarating winter air makes it seem so.

4. There's better hunting; and all the fur-bearing animals are then in condition.

On the whole, it was the unanimous opinion of our party that the winter trip was more enjoyable than the summer jaunt. We came home in better health.







THE LOUP-CERVIER (CANADA LYNX).

## FIELD-NOTES.

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### THE LOUPCERVIER (LYNX CANADENSIS).

THE loup cervier (lucivee), or Canada lynx, is the largest of the wild-cat species found in Northern New England and the Canadas. The name "loup-cervier" is that given the animal by the early French settlers of Canada, who ascribed to it the practice of dropping from the branches of trees upon the backs of deer, which it killed by tearing open their throats, and sucking their blood: hence they called it the loup-cervier, or stag-wolf. From them our people got it as lucivee, and sometimes lucifee.

Another common designation of the animal, particularly in rustic neighborhoods, is the "bobcat," manifestly from its short tail; but this latter name can hardly be regarded as discriminative, since it is applied indifferently both to the loup cervier and the Bay lynx. The same objection lies in the generic name, *lynx*: so that,

on the whole, the rather grotesque name of lucivee would seem the most definite, as well as the most appropriate.

Naturalists describe at least seven varieties of lynx. Of these our lucivee would seem to most nearly resemble the boreal lynx of Northern Europe and Siberia. Nor (in description) would it appear to differ greatly from the caracal of Asia Minor and Northern Africa.

The loup cervier is thirty-five and thirty-nine inches in length, and stands twenty and twenty-three inches in height. Larger individuals have been met with. These figures give the running average. Its head is shaped like that of a domestic cat, but is much larger. Its ears stand erect, and are tipped each with a peculiar tuft of black hairs. On each side of its lower jaw is a bunch of gray fur mixed with long black hair. Add to this the usual "smellers" of the *felidæ*.

Its tail is four, sometimes five inches long, tipped also with black, and having something of the tassel form. Its coat of fur and hair is soft and long, changing color twice in the year. During the summer, the animal is of a dingy gray tending to a reddish hue: in winter — particularly in December and January — it is of a lustrous stone-gray on its sides. Along its back are interspersed long hairs tipped with black. Underneath, its body is white, mottled beautifully with black spots.

Its eyes are very large, round, and sharp, capable of staring unwinkingly for a great length of time: hence the adjective *lynx-eyed*, and perhaps the ancient fable that the lynx could see through stones and wooden partitions. The natural color of the eyes is that of bright

hammered silver. In the presence of a foe, or its prey, the eye seems to increase in size as the creature grows mad, and brighten to something much like flame. Its teeth are feline, — very long, and extremely sharp.

The loup-cervier has long, retractile claws, very sharp, and not unlike those of a large owl. It has four toes on each foot; and its feet are broad, and thickly padded with fur, even upon the bottoms. Its legs are thick, and very muscular. Its whole aspect bespeaks fierceness and an active habit.

This animal breeds once in a year, in litters of two and three ordinarily, four unfrequently. Like most carnivorous beasts, the female will defend her young with her own life.

The common food of the lynx is the hare, which it slaughters in almost incredible numbers. Like other animals of the cat kind, they watch for their prey, and steal upon it with a spring. In the winter, their tracks may frequently be seen where they have crept up slow, with footprints not four inches apart. In running, they leap and strike all their feet together, going from six to ten feet at a bound.

Back in the unincorporated townships and in the forests of Northern Maine and Canada, where lynxes are numerous, they often go in droves of from five to ten, and are then more bold than when single. Even at the present day, the back farmers often lose sheep and lambs from their depredations.

They differ from the domestic cat in that they are good swimmers, and often resort to the water of their own accord; crossing narrow lakes and ponds readily,

paddling noisily along about as fast as one can row a boat. The State of New Hampshire pays a bounty of one dollar on their heads: the State of Maine pays no bounty.

They enter traps pretty readily if set with ordinary skill. To bait a trap for the lucivee, a chunk of fresh meat alone is necessary: if scented with assafoetida or beaver-castor, so much the better. They can be easily treed with hounds. It is not often that one will run over a couple of miles. Generally, they flee before dogs; though a common hound is scarcely a match for one in a fight.

The loup-cervier seldom attacks a man unless in defence of its young, or when cornered up, or perhaps surprised while devouring its food. Such instances of adventure with the animal as have fallen within the writer's observation or knowledge have been introduced in the body of this work.

Until quite recently, the Hudson-Bay Company have exported from six to ten thousand pelts of the lynx annually; and there now come from the State of Maine probably about two hundred skins yearly.

There is yet another species of the lynx found in the open and settled portions of this State (Maine), indifferently known as the wild-cat, and often confounded with the loup-cervier. This is the Bay lynx proper. It is rather smaller than the Canada lynx: its fur, too, is less valuable, and far less handsome; the black tufts on its ears less marked, and sometimes wholly wanting; and the bottoms of its feet bare. This latter circumstance, indeed, constitutes a distinguishing characteris-

tic The true lucivee has always the bottoms of its feet well padded with fur.

I cannot better conclude this notice of the lynx than by appending an adventure contributed by my friend Mr. G. W. Burleigh of Boston, and given as follows:—

“I had gone up to M——, in Somerset County, Me., to visit the Dexter boys, ‘Dave,’ ‘Bud,’ and ‘Leve,’ cousins of mine. This was in the spring of 1866. I found the boys in the maple-sirup business.

“Now, making maple-sugar out in the woods, amid softly-dripping sap-troughs, &c., is, as everybody knows, a very poetical performance to hear about, and see on paper; and, being at that time without any actual experience, I believed in it as such, and at once closed with their invitation. But here let me say, that, in my humble opinion, those who wish to preserve its poetic phase had better keep out of its practical details. Poetry is poetry; but smoke-smarty eyes and wet feet are not, and never will be, in my judgment.

“Their camp was situated on a ‘hard-growth’ ridge, a mile or over from their residence, which lay on the other side of a wide wooded valley. They had two hundred trees tapped, and were going on in true old New-England style; i.e., boiling in brass kettles slung on a ‘lug-pole’ over a stone arch, and all under the open canopy of heaven. They had, however, a sort of shed of loose boards, with a quantity of hemlock and old coats to sleep on: for there had been an excellent run of sap during the entire week; and they kept their kettles *heaving* night and day, only going over home for ‘supplies.’ I went over in the afternoon, and had

not got the romantic all rubbed off ere night came on. It was a foggy, early April evening, and grew very dark. How bright the fires looked, while all about us seemed a black wall! It was about nine o'clock, I think, for I had just finished taking a very long lesson in 'sheepskins' from an old pan full of snow, when we heard, seemingly from the summit of the ridge above us, a cry, — a peculiar, quavering screech.

" 'There!' exclaimed Leve: 'he's coming back!'

" 'What *was* that?' said I.

" 'An old, half-starved lucivee,' said Dave.

" 'A lucivee!'

" 'Yes, lucivee, or bobcat: some call 'em bobcats.'

" Just then we heard the cry again, down nearer than before.

" 'Yes, he's coming down to look at us once more,' said Bud.

" 'You've heard him before, then?' I said.

" 'Oh, yes! He was screeching round here all last night. Likes the smell of things, I expect.'

" I had heard, some time or other, something about bobcats, but had supposed they were rather fierce creatures. These fellows, however, were certainly taking a very cool view of the subject, — cool to me, at least; for, saving their presence, I should have bolted forthwith. Meanwhile there came another cry not more than twenty rods off.

" 'Aren't you afraid of him?' I demanded, getting a little nearer the kettles.

" 'Well, no; not much,' said Dave. 'I shouldn't care to have him tackle me, or spring on to me. But he



won't do that, I guess; hasn't yet, at any rate; and he's been hanging round us here for as much as a week.'

" 'What sends him here? '

" 'Hungry, half starved. Likes the looks of us. *Wants to eat us*, you see, but don't quite dare to commence,' explained Dave with great *sang-froid*. And a few minutes after we heard the brush snap a few rods off in the darkness. I began to feel very uncomfortable.

" 'He's only walking round the camp,' said Dave. 'It's a way he's got. Look sharp off there, and you'll see his eyes, perhaps. We saw 'em last night.'

" 'I needed no further prompting to stare like an owl.

" 'There!' whispered Leve, pointing with his finger. 'Look there! He's eying us!'

" 'Yes, I plainly discovered two pale gleaming spots, like 'fox-fire,' flashing in the blackness, not more than fifty yards off.

" 'Now watch!' said Leve; and, suddenly snatching up a blazing brand, he launched it toward the eyes. The light gleamed out among the trees; and I caught a glimpse of a large, grayish animal, bounding aside with a snarl.

" 'D'ye see him?' cried Leve.

" 'I undoubtedly did. About the size of a large dog, I thought.

" 'Through the night, the boys took turns watching the kettles and tending the fire; and they had to frighten off the creature several times before morning.

" 'Perhaps it was partly due to the novel and not

very downy character of my bed of boughs in the old shed; but I did not sleep very well. The proximity of such a beast had much the effect of green tea upon me; and I inly resolved to leave camp before another night. But the boys didn't seem to mind him much. They had got used to him, I suppose; though, along toward morning, I overheard a bit of conversation between them.

"'Tell you what,' said Leve: 'I think the old chap's getting a little *too* familiar. Comes up a little nearer every night. He'll be pouncing on to some of us yet, I do believe.'

"'We'll stop his calls,' said Dave. 'I'm going over home some time to-day, and get a gun, and take over the dog. We'll have some fun to-night.'

"Our nocturnal visitor disappeared with the dawn; and the fearlessness of daylight so revived my courage, that I concluded to stay and see the result of the next night.

"'Have you ever seen him in the daytime?' I inquired of Leve after Dave had gone.

"'No,' said he. 'They don't come out till dusk. Never saw one while the sun was up. They keep in the swamps and in thick hemlock-clumps by day. I once stumbled on to one lying under a lot of tall brakes down in our lower pasture; but he ran like a fox. Generally, they're shy. But this one seems so rabidly hungry, that I've begun to get a little skittish of him. Being in the spring so, he don't get much to eat, I suppose.'

"Toward evening, Dave came back with the gun (an old 'Queen's arm') and a large white hound. A queer old genius, a sort of hunter or trapper, whom

Dave announced as 'Old Hughy Watson,' came over with him.

"The evening was clear and starlit. We shut up the hound in the shed, and waited for the lucivee.

"About nine o'clock, his dismal cries began to sound again; and by and by we saw him coming up through the opening on the snow-crust, which kept breaking under him at almost every step. We had the old gun loaded with buckshot, and ready for him: but either the night was too light for him, or some suspicion had crossed his mind; for at a distance of twelve or fifteen rods he stopped, and, sitting down like a cat, watched for a long time. Possibly he smelled the hound. We waited for him to come nearer; till at last Leve, getting out of all patience, fired off the gun at him. Almost with the report we heard a sharp growl, and saw the beast bounding off among the trees. Dave let out the hound; and we all ran after him with the gun and axe. At the place where the creature had set when Leve fired were several red blotches on the snow; and we saw now and then a drop as we ran on after the hound, whose deep baying rang out from the swamp below.

"But presently the barking stopped; and, keeping on, we came out to a ledge, or cairn, of great rocks, which lay piled upon each other, and saw by the dim starlight the white form of the hound dodging and whining about a large, dark crevice at the foot of it.

"'Gone into that ledge!' cried Old Hughy, panting up after us. 'Down under them rocks' (*pant, pant*). 'I know the place well' (*pant, pant*). 'Chased a bear in there once. Devil of a hole under there!'

"Going up to the mouth of the den, we could plainly hear the lucivee growling and fretting. The buckshot and the chase had irritated his temper. But he was very deep down under the rocks.

"'What's to be done?' said Dave. 'We can't get him, can we, Hughy?'

"'Not unless you've got pluck enough to crawl down in there and shoot him. That's the way I got the bear we chased in here. By crawling down some ten feet, you can see round into the den.'

"'Gracious! you wouldn't catch me down there!' I couldn't help exclaiming.

"'But could you see any thing after you got in?' asked Dave.

"'See his eyes,' said Hughy, coolly.

"'The deuse! You must be fools to go in there!' I remonstrated. 'He'd scratch your' —

"'Going to do it?' asked Hughy, without paying much attention to my opinion.

"'But the boys held back.

"'I'd go if it was in the daytime,' said Dave; 'but it's so confounded dark in there, that I'll be hanged if I want to to-night. They're pretty rough-handed chaps when cornered up, you know.'

"'Well,' said Hughy, 'if you won't, I s'pose I shall have to. Hand me that gun! It's well loaded, is it? Now stand ready with that axe, and the rest of you get clubs. Cut them some clubs, Dave.'

"We did as he directed; and the old man, getting down on his hands and knees, crept into the aperture. But it was not without a shudder that I saw his old

boots disappear in the blackness, and listened to the harsh snarling of the maddened beast. There was an exhibition of pluck, certainly! We waited in breathless suspense. Suddenly the scraping of the old fellow's knees and toes ceased. There was a click and a tremendous explosion, followed by growls; and a volume of powder-smoke gushed forth from the mouth of the den.

"But, instead of Hughy, there sprang out the lucivee, fairly cutting a summersault in its headlong haste. The hound sprang upon him: he would have escaped us but for him. A great scrimmage ensued there in the dark. The boys payed on with the axe and their clubs; and, amid a terrible uproar of barks and snarls and shouts, the lucivee was brought to the ground, and despatched, but not before he had laid open several long, ugly-looking scratches and slits in 'Spot's' white hide.

"But what end had Hughy made? We turned. The old fellow was now just wiggling out, — a little sheepishly, I fancied.

"At sight of him, first Dave, then all of us, began to laugh.

"'Humph!' exclaimed the old man, giving the carcass a kick. 'Didn't give me time to take aim!'

"But beyond some long rents in his old coat, received (he explained to us) when the creature scrambled over him, he had sustained no personal damage; which I couldn't help thinking was getting out of it better than he deserved."

## THE FISHER (*MUSTELA CANADENSIS*).

IT is not often that a fisher is now captured in the southern and settled portions of Maine; and, so far as the writer has been able to learn, the same holds good of the States of New Hampshire and Vermont, and in Northern New York. Fifty years ago, however, they were not unfrequently trapped along our pond-shores; and hunters often shot them in swamps and on the banks of forest-brooks. The only place within the writer's knowledge where the fisher may now be trapped with any degree of certainty is on the head waters of the Androscoggin, about the Umbagog lakes. Indeed, it may be a fact worth stating, that these lakes now offer the best hunting-ground in New England for nearly all our Northern animals. A naturalist might count with tolerable certainty on securing a specimen here, not only of the fisher, but also of the loup-cervier, the pine-marten, and the ermine. The fisher is also not uncommonly reported about Moosehead Lake, and along the west branch of the Penobscot. I hear of them, too, in Aroostook County. It would seem that they exist in considerable numbers throughout the

"wild lands" belonging to the State; though never found plenty, like the loup cervier, in any locality. They are shy, noiseless creatures, going silently about, and not a little given to skulking; but, when brought to bay, are most indomitable fighters, and remarkably tenacious of life. In hunters' phrase, "Dogs have no business with them;" and I have been told of a matched fight gotten up by some loggers between a fisher and the loup cervier, from which the fisher came off the victor.

The fisher is essentially a Northern animal. The northern sections of the United States constitute the southern limits of its range, which extends northward to the Frozen Ocean. Like the loup cervier, it preys mainly on the hare; though some hunters hold that it catches trout from the brooks. In backwoods neighborhoods it is commonly called the "fish-cat,"—from this circumstance, perhaps: indeed, many writers term it the "fisher-cat." But it is not properly a cat. Old writers called it the "pekan," from the French; and some have confounded it with the carcajou and the wolverine. But the fisher is unmistakably of the genus *Mustela* (the weasel), being the largest of that family of animals found in North America. The description of this animal given by Audubon and Bachman, however, is quite inapplicable to the fisher of Maine. These writers give the weight of a full-size specimen as eight pounds and a half; whereas the one we caught would not have fallen an ounce under *forty* pounds. This one was a very muscular, though rather slim creature, with short, stout legs, low, broad ears, and rather large eyes. Its

body was forty-one inches in length; its tail twenty-five inches, and very bushy and broad at the base. It emitted the peculiar musky odor of the weasel family; and its muzzle resembled that of the marten. It had five claws to the foot, very long and sharp.

The fisher of Maine breeds once a year, in litters of two, three, and sometimes four, about the first of May. Its lair is sometimes under *ricks* of old logs, not unfrequently in fallen trunks, and often in hollow trees. One of the writer's earliest recollections of the fisher is connected with a certain "log-trap," upon which he, in company with another youngster, once labored for upwards of a week at sly jobs. It was intended for a bear or a lynx, — any thing that might choose to walk in and pull the spindle. It was built of rough spruce-logs; was about ten feet square by six in height. The logs were locked together at the corners by means of scarfs and notches; and the roof was of stout poles, loaded with large stones to hold them down. In the front-side we left a doorway, some three feet and a half in width; and into this, by means of stakes and withs, we fitted a slide-door of split and hewn spruce-planks, made to play up and down between the stakes.

When *set*, the door was raised and held in its place by a pole on the inside, which ran back to the "figure four" and spindle. The spindle was baited with a hare, and bits of hare-meat were scattered about the entrance.

In addition to this, we would drag a freshly-killed hare or partridge in toward the trap, from various points off in the woods, to make a scented trail.



The reader can imagine what a job this must have been for boys of thirteen and fourteen, and how much we doted on it.

I remember that we used to get up as soon as it was light to get our day's stint of "husking" — it was in October — done by noon, in order to have the afternoon to work on our trap. Then how eagerly we used to take our axes, steal off into the woods, and follow far up to the little knoll among the spruces, to resume our labors! .

And when at last it was done, and set, with what anticipation we waited over night, and visited it in the morning! But there gaped the door. Nothing had been near it.

We would not allow ourselves to be disappointed, however.

Over a week passed; but the trap remained empty. Despite our sanguine faith in it, we began to grow less expectant as we crept through the low hemlocks at the foot of the knoll, only to see the great black hole under the raised door staring at us in the midst of an utter stillness, while the great shaggy spruces seemed to hang over it in gloom and hopelessness.

"Tell you what," said Tommy, as for the fifth time we stood eying our luckless trap, "it's too big and glaring-like. Tells its own story, — scares 'em. They mistrust it. Can't we do something?"

"Might put a lot of boughs and brush over it," I suggested doubtfully.

"Yes, and pick up all those fresh chips lying about, and scatter dead leaves over the hewings and the places where we've torn up the earth. Let's do it."

We fell to work again, and disguised the structure so effectually, that, at a little distance, it would have been easily mistaken for a thicket of small spruces, and, letting the boughs droop over the entrance, made it resemble a mere gap between two scrubby shrubs.

Perhaps it was this, perhaps from mere luck; but the next afternoon, when we came up, it was sprung.

We could scarcely believe our eyes, we had been disappointed so long.

"Sprung, sure!" said Tommy as we came out in sight.

The door was down hard and fast. We edged up. All was quiet.

"Don't believe there's any thing inside," muttered Tommy.

There were crevices between the rough planks of the door: we peeped through. At first, all seemed dark; then we caught the glow of two fiery eyes, and gradually made out a dusk figure crouching in the corner.

"A bear," I thought.

"Too small for a bear," Tommy said.

It was much too small.

On looking longer, we could see its shape.

"Just about as large as Ponto" (a neighbor's dog), said Tommy. "Guess it's a fish-cat" (that was our name for the fisher).

Going round to the corner in which the creature crouched, we could see its long black hair through a chink.

"That's a fish-cat fast enough" said Tommy. "Look at that wiry hair!"

We got a pole, and gave him a poke through the chink. With a snarl, the beast jumped away to the other side; and, on thrusting in the pole, it was grabbed, and nearly wrested out of Tommy's hand.

"What shall we do with him?" I asked, after we had poked him about the trap a while.

"Do with him? Why, kill him and skin him, of course, same as all hunters do," replied Tommy.

"Yes, I know. But *how* shall we kill him?"

That was not so easily planned at first; for we had no gun with us, — nothing but an axe.

"I don't see but one way to do it," said Tommy. "One of us must get up on top, and hoist the door slowly, — a *leetle*; and the other must stand ready to knock him with the axe when he sticks his head out."

"All right," said I, climbing on to the trap. "You knock him. I'll lift up the door."

Tommy took the axe, and stood ready to strike. I began to wiggle the door.

"Now slow," cautioned Tommy. "Leetle at a time. Not too much."

I raised it a few inches.

"Leetle more," said Tommy.

I lifted it another inch or two. No movement on the part of the fish-cat.

"Leetle higher."

I tugged it up several inches more.

"Strange he don't rush," muttered Tommy. "Stamp on the poles."

I stamped, still holding up the door; when, quick as wink, out leaped the fisher. Tommy struck; and the

next thing I saw was both of them rolling over on the ground, and then the black creature making off into the woods with long leaps.

"Hurt, Tommy? Did he scratch ye?" exclaimed I, jumping down.

"No; I guess not much," said Tommy, picking himself up out of the dry leaves. "Got his claws into my jacket a little."

There were two or three long rents in it.

"Didn't bite ye?"

"No; but I smelt his breath: stunk awfully, I tell ye!"

We re-baited the trap, and went home wiser, if not richer in fur.





THE CANADA OTTER.

## THE OTTER (*LUTRA CANADENSIS*).

**B**EAUTIFUL sleek fellows! Every pond, lake, and stream of the State was formerly the scene of their aquatic sports. Nor have they retired before the settler completely, like the beaver. The capture of an otter is no unusual occurrence along streams well studded with mills. Sometimes one is turned out from under the very board-piles of a saw-mill. Along the outlet of a small pond in the southern part of Oxford County (a stream well stocked with fish), the writer has known of at least five being taken within the last two years. At several localities in the State, otter-trapping is made a business of still, with fair returns, by a few old "professionals." Each has his "line of traps" set along a chain of ponds. These are visited once a fortnight by some; once a month only by others. They are set under water, at the foot of the "slides," on a "bed" of stones and turf, in such a manner that the otter is held beneath the surface, and drowned, where it lies on the bottom. The carcass may remain here three weeks without injury to the fur. A brother-trapper passing is not expected to meddle with an otter, even if seen struggling in the trap; whereas, in case of a mink,

the "laws of the trap" require him to kill it, and hang up the carcass to a neighboring bough, then reset the trap. Generally, however, the old fellows are very decently distrustful of each other. To rob a trap is an offence of the "high sass" order, and never overlooked nor forgiven. "Old Sabattus" (Indian), who used to hunt and trap throughout the south-west portions of the State, is believed to have killed a man whom he caught robbing his otter-traps. The old heathen's truly laconic account of the matter was, "Him rob my trap. Me see him. Me follow him. Pretty soon he go sleep. He never wake up."

Like the beaver, the otter is very awkward on land, and correspondingly expert in water. It dives apparently without effort, and swims with astonishing swiftness. It will remain under water from one to three minutes; and, after diving, may sometimes be seen crouching quietly on some sunken log or rock.

While our party were up in the "wild lands," we had the good fortune to trap three otters at their winter burrow; some account of which is hereafter inserted. From one of these were taken the following measurements: Length, exclusive of tail, thirty-nine inches; length of tail, twenty-six inches; weight, (guessed to be) rising thirty pounds. The head was very broad and blunt; and the muzzle so large, that, at first sight of it down in the burrow, we took it for a bear's. The tail was long, large, round on top, and flat beneath. The legs were shortish, and the feet webbed.

The otter always lives in connection with the water. Its food is fish principally. Its young are brought



forth (in Maine) about the first of April, in litters of two, sometimes three. Our common hounds, and the average of dogs, are hardly a match for the otter when at bay. As illustrating this, the writer recollects an incident of old school-days, which left at the time a very vivid impression. The schoolhouse was situated but a few rods from a large brook, which flowed into a pond not far below. It was the usual, unpretending "temple of science" one generally sees out in the country, or rather *did see* ten years ago; since which time there has been marked improvement in educational architecture. The *sills* rested flatly on the bosom of mother-earth; but on one side we had dug a hole under the sill, just large enough to admit a nine-year-old. This hole was used in playing "bear," with that remorseless disrespect for jacket and pants common to all such urchins. On the morning in question, "bear" had been chosen, and had just wriggled into his den; when, lo! he uttered a sudden yelp, and came out, contrary to all rules and established precedent, crying out, "Suthin' under there! A great, big" —

Then there was juvenile to-do. A flock of crows besieging a raccoon could hardly have made a greater uproar. At first, we supposed it to be a veritable bear; but at length the older boys — after some cautious peeps under the sill — pronounced it an otter. Otters were not unfrequently captured along the brook.

Just then the "mistress" came, and, entering the house from the other side, rang her little bell. The summons was not to be disregarded; yet we were far too excited to go quietly to our seats. We all ran to her

open-mouthed: "O Miss ——! There's an otter under the schoolhouse! A great, big thing! Big as the stove! Bigger'n the stove! And, oh, we can hear him growl! And he like to ate up Billy Murch! Oh, he'll eat us all up!"

Now, Miss —— was a city girl, who practically knew no difference betwixt an otter and a catamount. She did the correct thing: she just clapped one little hand to her side, and fainted.

Fresh dismay among the juveniles, boo-hooing from all the "abecedarians;" till at last one practical little girl let a dipper of water fly plump in the mistress's very white face. That set her a-gasping, and revived her, but demoralized her collar utterly, — a fact every urchin of us observed with considerable awe. She sat up, dripping, with a faint little "Ah! where is it?"

We at once gave the subject mouth again: whereupon Miss —— clutched down her fairy-ribboned hat, shied fearfully out at the door, and ran, followed by all the little girls, to a great flat rock on the other side of the road. There they made a stand, and stood huddled together, the mistress in the centre of the group. I remember just how we little chaps stared at this, to us, unwarranted piece of timidity: we couldn't understand it.

But we ran off, and gave an alarm; and soon half a dozen youngsters of the neighborhood came running with dogs. First they sent under a large black-and-white dog called "Spot," a well-known canine character thereabouts. Spot dived in with a bark. Then came such an outcry as made our eyes stick out. How they

*bumped up* against the floor of the schoolroom! Such yelps and yells and worryings! 'Twas terribly exciting for us. Poor little Miss —— took flight from the great rock, with all the girls, for the nearest house. Then out came Spot with a rush, a yelp, and chatter of teeth at his tail.

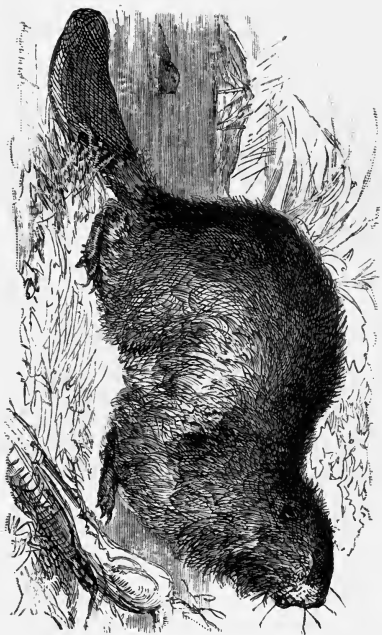
A hound was next sent under, and after him a large brindled dog, with even less success. The same dog could not be got under twice.

Finally a board in the schoolroom floor was taken up, and the animal shot from above.

But I recollect, that, during the remaining days of that term, the *mistress* would never enter the schoolhouse, nor yet approach very near, till some of us boys had looked under the sill, and reported.

## THE BEAVER IN MAINE (*CASTOR CANADENSIS*).

THAT beaver were once abundant in this State is shown by the remains of dams and huts along nearly every stream and brook of any considerable size. One can scarcely cross a meadow, or follow up a valley, particularly in the middle and northern portions of the State, without coming upon some of these old signs. Indeed, many small meadows seem to have had their origin in a beaver-dam at their foot; and here and there small ponds may be found pent up by the same agency, and not yet filled with alluvial matter. One of the most remarkable of these latter is on Salmon Brook, a tributary of the Aroostook River, locally known as "Salmon-Brook Lake;" a very considerable sheet of water, where, not more than four years since, a colony of beaver were still living. The last "family" were caught by a hunter named Sutor, living at Presque Isle. There are now, or at least were less than a year ago, beaver living on Beaver Brook, another affluent of the Aroostook, about eight miles to the westward. Possibly the lumbering operations conducted there during the present winter (1873) may have disturbed them. On many of the streams in the upper portion of Oxford County,



THE BEAVER.



there are still many small families of beaver: in the Diamond, the Cupsuptic, and the Beamus stream, there are said to be a few remaining. Along the head waters of the St. John's, the Allaquash, and also the Penobscot, beaver are frequently reported by the lumbermen. But they now choose small streams back in the deepest recesses of the wilderness for their huts and dams. They have been too often disturbed to build on the large rivers, as formerly; and, indeed, are fast dying out in this State, as in other localities. Our naturalists deem the beaver the last species of a genus of animals that have lived on the earth since a very remote epoch, — the genus *Castor*. The beaver (as a species) is perhaps the oldest of mammals; and it differs from all other animals in several particulars. Between the hind-legs is a pair of glandular sacs (having no connection with the generative organs). These sacs contain an odorous substance, which is the castor of commerce (*castoreum*). Hunters call it "barkstone." It is used in medicine, I believe; and is quite valuable, each sac being worth a dollar or over.

The beaver is essentially amphibious. Its body, from the end of the nose to the roots of the tail, is from thirty-three to thirty-six inches. The tail is about a foot long, an inch thick, and from five to seven inches in width: it is really a paddle both in shape and use.

Of teeth it has two incisors to each jaw, and eight molars. The incisors are the wood-choppers: they are from two to three inches long, arching, and protrude outward.

The feet have five toes: the forward toes are short

and close, the hinder ones long and palmated. The second toe of the hind-foot is armed with double nails. They make a very singular and unequal gait while walking on land, owing to the unwieldy form of their bodies, which slope down from behind the centre toward their feet. Their hind-feet also stand out awkwardly, which is of advantage to their progress in water.

The body of the beaver is covered with two kinds of hair: the inner coat thick, short, and silky, of a cream brown; the outer coat of coarser hair two inches long, and glossy black.

In weight, the beaver ranges from thirty to sixty pounds. The flesh is, in taste, a singular compound of venison and fish. That of the forward parts of the creature tastes like lamb (rather oily); that of the hinder parts and tail like trout somewhat. This is evidently from the fact that the animal nearly always lies with its hinder parts in the water. Indeed, the tail is covered with scales, and looks like a fish. The Indians were said to use the oil of the tail for many diseases; and, when dressed and cooked, they esteemed a beaver's tail the greatest delicacy that could be set before them.

The beaver does not attain its full growth till three years old, and is thought to live to the age of twelve or fifteen years. It breeds once a year (March); and goes with young four months, bringing forth from two to six per birth.

The beaver lives mainly on vegetable food; though I am inclined to believe that it not unfrequently catches a fish. In winter it subsists on the bark of green wood,



stored up late in the fall along the bottom of their ponds. Trappers used to hold that this wood was sunk in some mysterious way; but the process manifestly consists in weighting it with stones and mud.

On meadow-lands, where the current is light, their dams are simply of mud and water-grass; but, on rapid streams, sticks and drift-wood are used. When the current is strong, the dam is often in the shape of a crescent, the convex side to the stream. The huts are generally located not far above the dam, and are of sticks, rushes, willow-twigs, mud, and tussock-grass, all mixed together to form a sort of mortar. They are built very strongly, with two rooms, one over the other, communicating by means of a round hole. The lower is under water, the upper a dry chamber. Generally there is a hole left for a window facing up stream. When alarmed in their houses, they leap down from the dry chamber into the water of the room below, with a loud slapping of their tails, which at once alarms the occupants of all the neighboring houses. In swimming, they keep an almost upright position in the water, with the head and shoulders out.

Beavers pair some time during the months of July and August, living together till April; when the males leave the females to take care of their young for a month or more. Afterwards they again congregate, and, during the summer, roam about, regardless of their houses, from stream to stream. Old trappers hold that beaver know how high the water will be the ensuing spring, and always build their houses on the strength of this knowledge. The upper chamber of a beaver-hut is

never flooded. This "instinct" is deemed infallible. To this opinion the writer is unable to contribute any thing definite *pro* or *con*. Beaver always dam a pond for their huts sufficiently deep to not freeze to the bottom in winter. As many as ten individuals have been found dwelling together in one house; but, more frequently, the number does not exceed five or six. Their houses never communicate with each other, though sometimes contiguous. They are by nature timid and shy, and, when living together in families, seem highly intelligent, and appreciative of each other's society. But if a colony, or family, gets scattered, it is the opinion of trappers that they never collect again to live together; and, when they have thus strayed off from each other, they seem to grow dumpish and stupid. The beaver works mostly by night. The time for shooting them is just at dusk, when they all come out for a swim and a romp about their houses. A young friend from Aroostook County contributes the following graphic account of a visit to one of these sylvan haunts of the beaver. In company with a young "Blue-nose," he was following up the course of an unexplored stream, of which he says, "It was a large brook, sufficient to turn a saw-mill of the old-fashioned sort; and for about three miles it tumbled and foamed and roared among great bowlders which had rolled down from a steep crag to the eastward.

"Mountain-mink were darting about its limpid pools, uttering from moment to moment their sharp little cries.

"But, on reaching the top of the valley, we came out

into a broad meadow, or bottom, opening back upon a bright lake ten or twelve miles in length.

"For some distance back from the stream the bottom was free from trees, and the tall grass seemed full of partridges. The current flowed noiselessly past; till, as we approached the foot of the lake, a dull gurgling began to be heard.

"'There must be rocks of driftwood lodged in the channel,' said Jaques. 'Yes' (as we turned a little bend): 'see what a rick of sticks and knots!'

"The whole channel was filled with what seemed a jam of old wood and mud, over which the water fell in several places in foamy sheets.

"'But what are those things?' said I; for, glancing up stream, which, above this curious dam, expanded into a sort of mill-pond, I saw several conical-shaped mud-heaps rising four or five feet out of the water.

"At first we thought they must be the work of Indians, they looked so workmanlike; and we wondered why they had been made; when, seeing some queer, five-toed tracks in the mud under the dam, their origin suddenly flashed upon me.

"'They're beavers!' I exclaimed. 'Those are beaver-huts!'

"I had often read descriptions of them, though these were the first I had ever seen.

"'You're right,' said Jaques. 'Why didn't I think of it before?'

"All was quiet about the little settlement, which consisted of five houses, one of which seemed to be a double tenement, — two houses together.

“ ‘Wonder if they’re in their huts now,’ said Jaques.

“It seemed as if they might be: for there were fresh tracks on the bank and along the dam, which had recently been repaired with new branches and fresh sods; and there were green leaves floating about in the pond above the dam. The nearest hut was about twelve feet from the bank. The water was quite deep,—several feet.

“ ‘Get a pole,’ said Jaques.

“To do this we had to go back to the woods, across the meadow, where we procured a long, dry sapling; and, on returning to the stream, we saw where a clump of bushes had been gnawed off at the roots.

“Coming softly up to the bank, Jaques gave the nearest hut a prod with the pole. Instantly there was a plunge within, accompanied by a *loud slapping of the water*. Several more plunges followed, both in this hut and the others. There was a waving of the water deep down.

“Jaques repeated his thrust again and again, but without making much impression. The structure seemed a strong one. Branches, turf from the bank, and mud, mixed together, and dried in the sun, formed a thick, firm wall. The pole broke against it. But, feeling very curious to examine it, we took off our clothes, and waded out to the nearest hut.

“The water was waist-deep, the bottom muddy. The house had its foundation on the bottom, with walls of sticks and tussocks,—not smoothly plastered with mud, as above water, but rough, and jagged with knots, prongs, and brush. But on one side there was a hole about eighteen inches in diameter.

"We began to dig into the upper part, tearing out the sticks, and breaking through the mud. It was a firmly-connected mass, fully a foot in thickness. We finally broke it up, disclosing a round cavity as large as a half-hogshead.

"It was a *dry* room, too, having a floor above the water-level, with a circular opening, or trap-door, into a black hole beneath. Taking a stick, I thrust it into this hole. Immediately there was a rush out of the hole below the water on the outside; and we saw three long, black objects shoot off into the stream.

"The beavers were evidently in the upper room when we struck the house with the pole. In leaping down into the water, they had made the plunges we had heard; and I have since read that the loud slap which they give the water with their tails is their method of giving an alarm to their friends.

"There were a few bits of green wood in the upper room, and the tails of two large trouts. When first uncovered, it had a strong odor of castor. We waded around the other houses. They all had holes under water; and in two cases I noticed a smaller hole above the water, facing up stream, as if for the admission of fresh air."









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